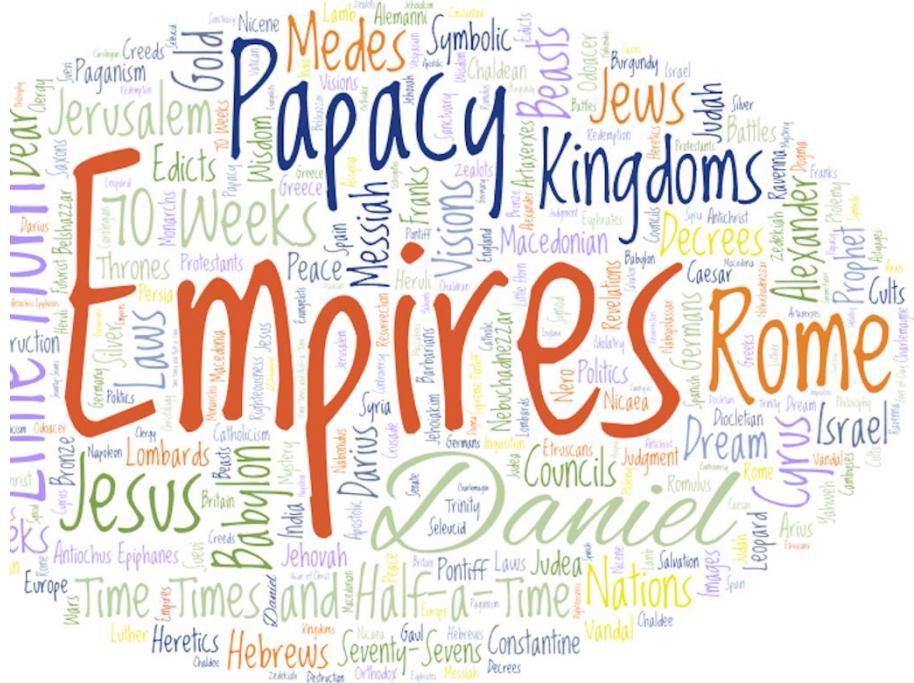


Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel

How it played out in the history of the world



Arie R.J. Blomerus

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*How it played out in the history of the
world*

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PREFACE

As far back as I can remember I have always believed that what

is called the "Old Testament," is a very important collection of books that should be studied by all who believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. Unfortunately, this important part of the Christian Bible is labelled "Old" Testament. Consequently, many Christians accept that it is of little value since they believe, or are taught, that it has altogether been replaced by the New Testament.

Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, reminded Titus of the importance of the Old Testament when he said:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.
(2Tim 3:16 KJV)

His reference to the Scriptures applies to the Old Testament since the second part of the Christian Bible was not yet compiled. Followers of Jesus Christ in his day, therefore, made abundant use of Old Testament Scriptures when they wrote about and preached on the gospel concerning our Lord and Saviour. As a matter of fact, the testament, that is, the covenant that Almighty God made with Abraham and his descendants, is but a very small part of the Old Testament. The same is true of the New Testament, which contains the new covenant which God had sealed with the blood of His Son, Jesus the Messiah. As Christians, we indeed do not live under the bondage of the Old Covenant since we have been set free when Jesus died on the cross, and in so doing, had given Himself as a living sacrifice for our sins.

The question then is, do we still need to spend time reading the Old Testament? After all, it is "old", not so? All we are then in need of, is the New Testament to go by as this is enough for us! However, think of the

house or apartment you live in. The primary reason for building such a structure is that we all need some protection against the elements; wind, rain, heat or cold. You can then build a house with walls, windows, doors, and a roof, but if you do not build it on a steadfast foundation, your house will not stand the test of time. Did Jesus not say that we should not build our house on sand? The same analogy, of course, also applies to the Christian who does not acknowledge the value of the Old Testament Scriptures given to us for reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness.

You may ask, "If the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament are still relevant today, do we even have to bother reading it, never mind trying to understand it? Why waste time on something that does not affect us?" Paul tells us, and indeed for a very good reason, that our faith is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets! (Eph. 2:20). It is on their word that we got to know God's plan for our salvation through His Son, Jesus the Christ! Granted, most of the Old Testament prophecies are indeed fulfilled, yet they are still a source of spiritual nourishment our souls are so badly in need of!

Growing up, my father who laboured all his life spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, instilled in me a curiosity to explore the words of the divinely inspired prophets of the Old Testament. I will never forget the enthusiasm, or shall I rather say, inspiration under the influence of God's Holy Spirit, with which he could bring to light the deeper meaning of the prophetic messages of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel along with all the other Old Testament warriors of God.

My aim with this book was then to write in common language, a commentary, or shall I rather say, explanatory notes, on the visions in the Book of Daniel, and especially with the history of the nations and kingdoms in mind. I believe that the Book of Daniel is often one of the most abused books of the Bible, not only done by laymen but also by many preachers and often those who are classified as biblical scholars. My hope, therefore, is that this brief study will inspire you to read and study the Old Testament prophets. Although my presentation is based on thoroughly researched material, I do not claim to have all the answers, nor that what I present here is the only "correct" interpretation of the words of the prophets.

Throughout the ages, Daniel's prophecies have been debated, preached upon, analysed and written about by thousands of preachers,

evangelists, scholars and laymen. One would think that by now there would be consensus about the meaning thereof but alas, we have not yet reached that point and maybe never will. In all fairness, the conclusions I arrived at in this study are, in the first place, not at all new. Solomon, the wise King, once said, "*There is no new thing under the sun,*" and I believe that it would be appropriate to say that concerning exegesis (interpretation) of the prophecies of the Old Testament, there is indeed no new thing under the sun! Secondly, I have not yet found exegesis that cannot or have not been criticised, especially when the subject of exegesis concerns the apocalyptic prophecies recorded in the Bible. Another wise man, one who, by the Spirit of God, "*was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter,*" also said, "*for we know in part*".

Notwithstanding the many hours I have spent on research, one thing I can in all honesty say is that I now, more than ever, understand what the Apostle Paul meant by the words, "...*what we see now is like a dim image in a mirror*" and, "*what I know now is only partial*". I do not then expect everyone to agree with everything I have said, for that would be arrogant and unrealistic, but I do ask that you do not let our disagreements keep us from extending the love of Christ towards each other. Always keep in mind that our knowledge is but only partial.

The prophecies of Daniel are clearly layered with symbols representing something of significance. Therefore, for us living in modern times, a superficial reading of his prophecies makes no sense at all. For this reason, most people find it extremely difficult to see the connection between a prophetic symbol, such as a ten-horned beast, and the event or thing it represents. However, for people living in the times of Daniel, it would not have been such a strange phenomenon. They were acquainted with statues graphically portraying animals and humans combined and of course exhibiting their own type of spiritual or moral message to the observer. For them, Daniel's four strange beasts coming up from the sea would not have rendered a problem and they probably would have, without much difficulty, understood what such a vision would have represented for the mysteries and mysticism formed an integral part of cult worship. Therefore, the more we can read about the history of ancient civilisations the less difficulty we will have understanding Daniel's symbolic portrayals of the nations.

Another problem the reader of Daniel often faces is the use of times, such as "a time, times and half a time" or, for instance, that a certain event would occur after a certain number of days or years have expired. Expositors often get so involved in solving the "riddle" of time in Daniel's prophecies that they completely lose the message the prophet wants to convey.

What every reader should then understand is that it is indeed not possible to exactly determine the date of fulfilment of Daniel's prophecies - the day, month and year - applying our modern calendar to his calculations. Let's take the following as an example. In Daniel's prophecy of the seventy sevens of weeks (Da. 9), the exact year in which the Messiah would appear is prophesied. So, if it is exact then we should be able to pinpoint His appearance precisely to the year when it happened but because of a few unknowns we just cannot do that. Surely we can come close, say within three to five or six years but because His appearance cannot be calculated to a specific year many expositors doubt the explanation of the Angel in this prophecy. However, Do we really have to know the exact date of His appearance? I would say that if we can come close, it should be good enough for us because the exact date of His appearance is less important than the fact that He did make His appearance on the scene and we can indeed calculate His appearance to within a few years, give and take.

A prominent North American preacher wrote that God is not more or less, He is exact and therefore the date of Jesus's first appearance is exact. To that I say, "Amen brother", but neither you nor I or any human being have the knowledge God has and who alone knows the exact times in history and when certain events have taken place or will materialise. Let me explain why dating events in ancient history is often problematic.

First, the ancient civilisations each had their own dating systems pertaining to their important events in history. There was never one universal calendar as in later times, namely a Julian or Gregorian calendar. Those were then times when every prominent civilisation had its own system of dating important things based on their own history and culture.

We so often learn from biblical history that something had happened in the year of the reign of a king, for example, in the sixth year of Josiah, king of Judah, or in the eleventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, king

of Babylon, etcetera. What we must keep in mind is that most of these ancient civilisations used lunar years of thirty days per month, each applying his own method to allow for the days lost in the process if compared to a solar year of about 365 days. Some civilisations again determined a year from Fall to Fall while others again reckoned a year dating from Spring to Spring.

It is, therefore, not a simple, straightforward process to marry the different calendars of the ancient world. In modern times the world, in general, uses the Gregorian calendar, and we also note ancient dates as before Christ B.C., or before the common era BCE. This was, on the whole, made possible by an Egyptian astronomer, geographer and astrologer, Claudius Ptolemy's "Canon of the Kings."

Ancient astronomers noted astronomical phenomena, such as eclipses, in ancient times. For example, on the second day of the fourth year of the reign of king X of say Babylon, the moon turned red. Since the universe created by God is mathematically precise and regular, astronomers can indeed accurately calculate when such an event happened. It is also possible to accurately predict when eclipses will occur in future. Ptolemy's canon lists kings of Babylon, Persia, the Macedonian and Roman era from 747 B.C. to 30 B.C. and his canon is generally considered by historians as accurate. It therefore forms the backbone of accepted chronology from 747 B.C. forward. However, many scholars found that his list of kings is not as accurate as generally accepted. In some cases, they believe his chronology is out by many years.

What about the birth year of Jesus Christ? It is important to know this since His birth year is the divide between ancient and new, i.e., before Christ and after Christ. Since we do not have a year 0, Jesus's birth year should be A.D. 1, and for many centuries it was indeed believed to be just that. However, we all now know that Jesus was not born in A.D. 1. His birth took place anything between 6 and 2 B.C. The reason for this miscalculation lies with the Roman scholar and theologian Dionysius Exiguus who is best known for his creation of a calendar that had led to the modern Gregorian calendar. From his calendar also stems the designations "B.C." and "A.D." Dionysius for some unknown reason then incorrectly calculated the year of Jesus's birth.

Does it really matter that Dionysius made such a "crucial" mistake? Certainly not. From all I have said about ancient calendar dates and their conversion to Gregorian dates it should be clear that we, in all fairness, and to this very day, allow for variances in our "exact" calculation of ancient dates!

I sincerely hope that this work brought to you in the love of Christ, will inspire those who may read it without bias or prejudice, taking a new look at the treasures found in the Old Testament.

Arie Blomerus

August 2019

PART I

BACKGROUND TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL

INTRODUCTION

Outside of the Book we know almost nothing of the man called Daniel. Ezekiel twice refers to some well-known character named Daniel who is commonly understood to be the author of the book.

Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness declares the Lord GOD. (Eze. 14:14 ESV)

You are indeed wiser than Daniel; no secret is hidden from you. (Eze. 28:3 ESV)

Some critics, however, argue that the Daniel referred to by Ezekiel is not necessarily the author of the Book of Daniel; something that will be discussed in due course.

Regardless, however, of what the critics believe, all that is known about Daniel from his Book is the following:

1. The literal meaning of the name Daniel is “God is my judge.” Daniel was a descendent of one of the high-ranking Judean families and he might also have been of royal blood. After Nebuchadnezzar, son

of Nabopolassar, had defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish, he straight away targeted Jerusalem and, after a short siege, captured the city. Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, surrendered quickly. However, Nebuchadnezzar restored him to his position as king of Judah.

As was customary, Nebuchadnezzar seized some of the temple objects for display in his own temple, captured several young men, all sons of Hebrew nobility, and took them with him back to Babylon. The young man Daniel and his three friends were among those hostages. This point in time marks the beginning of the Babylonian rule over Judah, also known as the Babylonian captivity, and which Jeremiah had prophesied would last for seventy years (Je. 25 & 29).

2. Daniel's exact age at the time of his deportation is impossible to determine. In Daniel 1:4 he and his three friends are called "yeladim," from the root word "yalad," which means something born, that is, a lad or offspring, the word referring to a boy, a child, a fruit, a son or a young man. The word is, therefore, frequently used in the Old Testament to indicate children, boys and young men. For instance, Rehoboam,

...forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men (yeladim) that were grown up with him... (1 Ki. 12:8 KJV)

3. The translators of the King James Version preferred to use the word "children" in Daniel 1:4, giving all of us reason to believe that Daniel and his friends could not have been much older than twelve years of age. On the other hand, if they were referred to as young men, we would probably have thought of them as having been older than children. The only certain thing we can deduce from this verse is that Daniel was not yet regarded as an adult at the time of his deportation to Babylon.
4. Daniel received a thorough education in the sciences of the Chaldeans, also in speaking and writing their language. Before he was captured and taken to Babylon, he evidently had received an equally thorough education in Hebraic learning such as the Law,

knowledge of the institutions of Judah and naturally the principles of the religion of his fathers. His strict training in the principles of the Hebrews' religion was then soon put to the test when he and his friends were offered to eat of the best of the king's table. He immediately saw the dangers of conformance to the habits of idolaters, resulting of course in defiling himself by customs forbidden by the Law. He and his friends, therefore, preferred a diet consisting only of vegetables and on their request, they were granted permission to abstain from eating of the king's food (Da. 1:8 – 14).

5. After three years of training, he and his friends were examined, and they passed the test with flying colours:

At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king spoke with them, and among all of them, none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore, they stood before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus. (Da. 1:18-21 ESV)

6. When he was called upon to interpret a dream of Nebuchadnezzar, which none of the Chaldeans had been able to do, he did so through divine inspiration. For this achievement the king gave him high honours, many gifts, even appointing him the ruler over the whole province of Babylon as well as chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.
7. At the death of Nebuchadnezzar his son, Evil-Merodach (Amel-Marduk), became king of Babylon, and under his reign, it appears that Daniel was forgotten. This, however, was not at all strange as it was the custom, many a time, for a new monarch to discharge the officers his predecessor had appointed and employed in government. We must keep in mind that Daniel was raised to power by the will of Nebuchadnezzar alone. He was given his positions for the services rendered to the king and with the change

of governance it would therefore not have been unusual for Evil-Merodach to have dismissed Nebuchadnezzar's appointees. Consequently, no mention is made of Daniel during the rule of Evil-Merodach nor in the short reign of his successor.

It was only at the end of Belshazzar's reign, and when he had seen the writing on the wall, that Daniel was again called upon to interpret the vision for the king. As a reward for his service, Daniel was again restored to his former honour. Belshazzar promised him a high rank at his court, but that very same night Babylon was invaded by the combined forces of the Medes and the Persians. Consequently, nothing came of Belshazzar's good intentions concerning Daniel. However, it was during the reign of Belshazzar that Daniel had two of his most remarkable visions regarding future events. These visions, more than any other mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures, unveiled what was to happen in time to come.

8. Under the reign of Darius the Mede, also known as Cyaxares II, Daniel again received honour when the king appointed him to a very high position. It happened when the kingdom was divided into 120 provinces. Over these provinces, three chief governors were appointed and of these Daniel was first in rank. The reason why he received this high ranking is not known, but the following may explain why Darius chose to appoint Daniel to this lofty position: (a) Daniel was familiar with the affairs of the Babylonian Empire, and his knowledge was in all probability superior to any of his rivals; (b) he had been employed for a very long time at Nebuchadnezzar's court and he was therefore familiar with government laws, usages and customs; (c) being himself a foreigner, Darius might have reasoned that it would be better to employ Daniel rather than a native Chaldean who may have been less loyal to a foreign ruler.

Daniel's promotion to such a high rank naturally would have sparked the malicious envy of at least some of those who were craving for the bestowal of such great honour. Therefore, using a principle of the laws of the Medes and the Persians, namely that a royal sanction could not be changed, Daniel's enemies succeeded

in securing the passing of a law which, for an appointed time, prohibited anyone to pray to any god or man except to the king. Consequently, anybody found disobeying this law, would be thrown into a den of hungry lions. Daniel's adversaries, of course, knew that he would disregard this new law since he was a man of integrity and of course a devout Jew who would never, in the slightest way, dishonour the God of his fathers.

As was expected Daniel, remaining steadfast in his faith in God, disobeyed the newly implemented law and as a result of his persistent determination to honour God, he was thrown into the lion's den. God, however, intervened on behalf of Daniel sending His angel to deliver Daniel from the jaws of the lions. In a miraculous way the king found Daniel alive and intact the following morning and, filled with delight on hearing Daniel's voice, he bestowed upon Daniel more honour than any other had in his kingdom.

9. Daniel then served at the court of the Medo-Persian government for a long time and, in his appointed position, he also made good use of his opportunity to render material aid to his own people. In all probability, he played a key role in securing Cyrus's decree which gave the Jewish exiles permission to return to the land of their ancestors. Although Daniel himself then never returned to the Holy Land, he at least had the joy in his heart to see his most ardent wish fulfilled.
10. In the third year of Cyrus, he received a series of visions in which he saw in minute detail the historical events and sufferings awaiting his people in time to come, that is up until the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (Da. 10 – 11). His vision recorded in the twelfth chapter of his Book projects a general presentation of events still outstanding and which will occur in the very last days in world history. After Daniel's conclusion of his book, we have no certainty of Daniel's whereabouts. There is no definite account of how long he lived and where and when he died. Even Josephus, a renowned Jewish historian, gives no account of his last days and death. However, Josephus says,

He was so happy as to have strange revelations made to him, and those as to one of the greatest of the prophets, insomuch that while he was alive, he had the esteem and applause both of kings and of the multitude, and now he is dead, he retains a remembrance that will never fail.⁶¹

Some believe that he died in Chaldea (Irak, Babylon), having been detained there serving the Persian Empire, while some suppose that he died at Shushan (Susa).

THE COMPOSITION OF THE BOOK

The Book is divided into two parts, consisting of six chapters each. The first part is generally classified as recordings of historical events, starting with the Babylonian exile (chapter 1) and ending with the fall of the Babylonian Empire (chapter 6). The second part, chapters 7 through 12, deals with visions received by Daniel concerning the future of nations and kingdoms.

The Book is composed partly in Hebrew and partly in Chaldee (Aramaic). In the first six chapters Daniel is spoken of in the third person, while in the last six chapters, with three exceptions, Daniel speaks of himself in the first person.

This phenomenon led some critics to the conclusion that the Book was composed by two authors, the one, a biographer and the other an autobiographer, but it is not at all a foregone conclusion. As a matter of fact, it is now almost universally acknowledged that the Book was written by one author.

DATE OF AUTHORSHIP

From Daniel 1:21 we learn that, “Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus.” In other words, Daniel arrived in Babylon in the time of Nebuchadnezzar and he stayed in Babylon until Cyrus

conquered Babylonia. In Daniel 10:1 he received a revelation from God in the third year of King Cyrus. Shortly after Nebuchadnezzar took the first captives from Judea to Babylon, his father, Nabopolassar, died and he succeeded him. Daniel, therefore, remained in exile throughout the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and his descendants and up until at least the third year of the reign of Cyrus.

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judea, the first group of exiles were taken to Babylon. This happened round-about the year 606 B.C. Cyrus the Great became king of Babylon in 539 B.C. and the third year of his reign would then be 536 B.C. However, the fact that Daniel received a revelation from God in the third year of Cyrus does not necessarily mean that Cyrus died in that same year, only that he was then still alive. If Daniel was a youth of about twelve years old in 606 B.C., he would have been at least eighty years old in the third year of the reign of Cyrus. The date of authorship of the Book was, therefore, anything between the years 606 B.C. and 539 to 530 B.C.

PLACE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON

The present Hebrew Canon is made up of three parts, the *Torah* (The Law), the *Nabi'im* (The Prophets) and the *Ketuvim* (The Writings) which, combined as one Book, is known as the *Tanakh*, an abbreviation of the first letter of **Torah**, **Naviim** and **Ketuvim**. I borrowed the term “present” from Robert Dick Wilson’s Studies in The Book of Daniel where he says that:

There is no evidence to show that any old Hebrew manuscript ever contained the books of the Old Testament Canon as they are arranged in our Hebrew Bibles as now printed. Nor did either of the great schools of Hebrew manuscripts, the Spanish, or the German-French, have the books arranged as they are now printed; nor are they printed in the order given in the Talmud. Nor do they follow the order of the earliest printed Hebrew Bibles, such as the Editio Princeps of Bomberg, which put the five Megilloth immediately after the Pentateuch.⁶⁴

The second part of the present Hebrew canon is again divided into two sections designated as Former and Latter Prophets. However, the books classified as The Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings) can be regarded as, for the most part, history rather than prophecy, although they include the stories of prophets such as Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha and others. The Latter Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and “the Twelve” minor prophets. The “twelve” are called minor because of the size of each book.

Enid B. Mellor, editor of “The making of the Old Testament” claims that:

The division into former and latter, or earlier and later, cannot be traced further back than the eighth century A.D., and is western rather than Hebraic.⁴¹

The process by which the third part of the present Hebrew Old Testament came to be accepted as canonical is, to say the least, elusive and very difficult to trace. The books contained in the Writings display a wide variety in their content and character. The Jewish sages grouped similar books together, such as the three books of poetry (Psalms, Proverbs and Job); the “Five Scrolls” (the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther), next comes Daniel and finally the work of the editor known as the Chronicler (Ezra, Nehemiah and 1 & 2 Chronicles).

One would expect to find the Book of Daniel in the section designated for the works of the prophets. However, it appears in the present Hebrew Canon among the third section, the Writings. Since we do not know the why and how of the decision that led to this classification we can only speculate as to why the Jews in all their wisdom placed Daniel’s work in the Writings, immediately before the Book of Ezra. It could seemingly have been for the following reasons:

1. The prophets of the Old Testament had a special function to fulfil in Hebrew society. Apart from the fact that they received divine messages and revelations directly from God, they were also commissioned to be teachers and preachers of righteousness. It was their task to convey to the people the divine will of God, to make them aware of sin and the wrath of God that awaits those who refuse to repent and to change their ways. In contrast to the

aforesaid, Daniel was a “seer,” however, he did not hold the office of a prophet. This and the fact that Daniel had led the life of a courtier in Babylon, rather than that of a “typical” Hebrew prophet, may have swayed the “modern time” rabbis to place his work among the Writings and not the Prophets.

2. Another reason may be found in the style and content of Daniel’s prophetic visions and revelations compared to the messages and predictions of the other Hebrew prophets. The prophecies of the “proper” Hebrew prophets, for the most part, cover the affairs of Israel, the punishment awaiting them because of their persistent idolatry, the fate of the countries surrounding them and the coming of the Messiah.

The prophecies of Daniel, on the other hand, cover the fate of the Jews after the Babylonian exile, the exact time of the coming of the Messiah, His rejection by his own, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Still more, Daniel sees future history, the rise and fall of nations and kingdoms and, the eventual establishment of the everlasting kingdom of God in which the saints will live in peace forevermore. It may just be that the remarkable difference in content and style between the Book of Daniel and the other prophetic books, persuaded the “modern time” rabbis to place the Book of Daniel in the Writings folder of the TaNaKh.

AUTHENTICITY

It is true that Daniel does not mention himself in the first six historical chapters of his book, which is quite understandable since in these chapters it is not the author, but the ensuing events that are the focal point. However, in the last six prophetic chapters Daniel speaks of himself, and rightly so, for here it was needed since prophecy is a revelation received by a specific person.

By the time the Jewish Old Testament was finally closed, i.e., no more additions and/or new books could then still be added to the canon,

the genuineness and authenticity of the book of Daniel was settled. Its status and authority as a valid book of the Old Testament were generally accepted with as little doubt as for any other portion of the Bible.

As with most of the books of the Bible, Old as well as New Testament, the book of Daniel has attracted the attention of scholars doubting its authenticity. The first open and public opposition to the authenticity of Daniel's book came as early as the third century A.D. from Porphyry, a Neoplatonist philosopher. Not alone did he doubt the genuineness of the book, but he was also a fierce enemy of the Christian faith. Jerome said:

Porphyry wrote his twelfth book against the prophecy of Daniel, (A) denying that it was composed by the person to whom it is ascribed in its title, but rather by some individual living in Judea at the time of the Antiochus who was surnamed Epiphanes. He furthermore alleged that "Daniel" did not foretell the future so much as he related the past, and lastly that whatever he spoke of up till the time of Antiochus contained authentic history, whereas anything he may have conjectured beyond that point was false because he would not have foreknown the future.⁵³

It surely is fair to say that since the start of the “long 18th century” (1685-1815), commonly known as the Age of Reason or simply the Enlightenment, no book of the Old Testament has been subjected to as much scrutiny as the Book of Daniel. The detailed and accurate prophecies in the book of Daniel have motivated many critics to support, in some way or another, what is known as the “Maccabean theory.”

In general, the “Maccabean theory” states that the book of Daniel was written at the time of the Maccabees in the second century B.C., and more specific, between 168 and 165 B.C. It is said that the Book was written to boost the morale of the Maccabees, who were in desperate need of something to encourage them to resist the Greeks who, under the leadership of Antiochus Epiphanes, were oppressing the Jews. The book, they say, was written by some Jew, who, to give greater authority and importance to his work, wrote under the assumed name of Daniel, setting the scene in Babylon during the captivity. Most of the modern so-called “higher” critics believe the book of Daniel was complete in its

final form around 165 B.C., however, some of them allow for parts of the book, such as chapters 1-6, to have an earlier date prior to 168-165 B.C.

The Maccabean theory, and for that matter the higher critics theory that the Book of Daniel is a forgery of the Maccabean period, has inspired many authors to either prove or disprove its claims.

The book of Daniel is specially fitted to be a battlefield between faith and unbelief. It admits of no half-measures. It is either Divine or an imposture.⁴⁷

I, for one, believe in the authenticity of the Book of Daniel, in other words, that it is not a forgery of the second century B.C. After an intensive study of the for and against to Daniel's book, I conclude that, for the most part, the claims of the higher critics, i.e., that the Book of Daniel is not an authentic work, cannot be proved beyond any doubt.

For those who want to know more about the authenticity of the Book of Daniel, I recommend reading Wilson's Studies in the Book of Daniel⁶⁴ and Cooper's Authenticity of the Book of Daniel.¹²

If Daniel's prophecies can be shown to have been written before Antiochus Epiphanes appeared on the scene, it would be considered definite and conclusive proof of Daniel's genuineness and authenticity. To this effect, the following should be taken note of:

1. We know for sure that the Jews of the first century recognised the Book of Daniel as an authentic book of the Jewish Bible. Jesus, therefore, refers to Daniel by name, and as a prophet,

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand.) (Matt. 24:15 ESV)

2. The Jewish historian Josephus says of Daniel:

But it is fit to give an account of what this man did, which is most admirable to hear, for he was so happy as to have strange revelations made to him, and those as to one of the greatest of the prophets, insomuch, that while he was alive he had the esteem and applause both of the kings and of the multitude; and now he is dead, he retains a remembrance that will never fail, for the several books that he wrote

and left behind him are still read by us till this time; and from them we believe that Daniel conversed with God; for he did not only prophesy of future events, as did the other prophets, but he also determined the time of their accomplishment.⁶¹

3. Again, Josephus mentions that Alexander the Great showed favour to the Jews after Jaddua (332 B.C.), the high priest, showed him Daniel's prophecy about a Grecian monarch who would conquer Persia. It is true that Alexander did favour the Jews, and Josephus's account of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem explains the fact. It also shows that the Jews in Josephus's days believed that Daniel's prophecies were known to the Jews in Alexander's days, long before the time of the Maccabees.
4. Two predictions alone are enough to prove to us that Daniel was a true prophet: (1) His prophecies reached far beyond the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. In fact, he foretells the rise and fall of the four great kingdoms, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman, and in Daniel's time, Rome played no significant role outside the borders of Italy. Daniel also saw that no other earthly kingdom would overthrow the fourth kingdom, but rather that it would be divided into many smaller parts. History shows that all this had indeed come to pass, and no fifth great earthly kingdom had arisen in place of the Roman Empire. (2) The prophetic prediction of the time of the Messiah's appearance, as dated from a certain decree – Him being cut off (killed) – as well as the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, stands as solid evidence against the speculations of the so-called "higher" critics, namely that the book of Daniel is a forgery fabricated at the time of the Maccabees.

Daniel was in the greatest credit amongst the Jews, till the reign of the Roman Emperor Hadrian: and to reject his prophecies, [says Sir Isaac Newton,]⁶² is to reject the Christian religion. For this religion is founded upon his Prophecy concerning the Messiah.

5. In the first book of Maccabees, Mattathias commands his sons to look to their ancestors and to follow their example. In his speech, he said:

Elijah, because of his great devotion to the Law, was taken up into heaven. Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael were saved from the flames because they had faith. Daniel was a man of integrity, and the Lord rescued him from the mouth of the lions. Take each of these ancestors of ours as an example, and you will realize that no one who puts his trust in the Lord will ever lack strength (1 Maccabees 2:58-61).

As can be seen, he mentions Daniel and his friends by name. Of this event, Cooper remarkably says the following:

The year of Mattathias' speech is given as 166 B.C., the year that he died, and the writing (or rather the forging) of the Book of Daniel is said to have occurred the year before, in 167 B.C. Now, is it at all feasible that the Maccabees could have invented an entire book and were then able to pass it off as Scripture - as part of the Old Testament! - when that book was only a year old? The Maccabees were men of the Bible, which is why they fought to the death for its restoration in Israel, and they would not have been so ignorant of its contents. Nor would the other Jews of that time who must have thought it passing strange that they had not been told as children of this Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah? How come their rabbi had never told them these things in shule? And why does the only copy of this Daniel appear so brand-spanking new?¹²

PART II

HISTORY OF KINGDOMS COVERED

NEO-BABYLONIAN (CHALDEAN) EMPIRE

T

he mighty Assyrian Empire came to a fall in about 612 B.C. The next most powerful empire in the ancient world was the Neo-Babylonian Empire that lasted until it was overthrown by Cyrus the Great in 539 B.C. At the time when the Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal, died; the Assyrian Empire was in serious trouble. In 627 B.C. the Assyrian king sent two of his relatives to Babylon as governors, but they were expelled by a Babylonian soldier, Nabopolassar, who happened to be the father of the famous Nebuchadnezzar II. Nabopolassar rebelled against the Assyrians and started a kingdom for himself with Babylon as his capital city. According to the Babylonian Chronicle (ABC2), Nabopolassar was accepted as king on 23 November 626 B.C. And this was the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

At about the same time a new Judean king, Josiah (640-609 B.C.), reigned in Judah. Josiah was eight years old when he became king and when he was about sixteen years old, he began to worship the God of his ancestor King David.

In the eighth year that Josiah was king, while he was still very young, he began to worship the God of his ancestor King David. Four years later he began to destroy the pagan places of worship, the symbols of the goddess Asherah, and all the other idols. (2 Ch. 34:3 GNB)

In 628-627 B.C., during Josiah's thirteenth year, God called Jeremiah to be a prophet in Judah (Je. 1:2). In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign (623 – 622 B.C.) the old Law book was found in the temple and read to Josiah. Josiah received a prophetic word from Huldah the prophetess, whereafter he commanded religious reforms, confining worship to the temple in Jerusalem (2 Kings 22-23). It is possible that Josiah's reforms had led to Judah's final break with Assyria.

In 616 B.C., Nabopolassar defeated an Assyrian force on the banks of the Euphrates, south of Harran. However, he was forced to retreat when an Egyptian army approached. In 617 B.C., Nabopolassar moved into the Assyrian heartland laying siege to Ashur, the religious capital of Assyria. The Assyrians, however, withstood the onslaught forcing Nabopolassar to return to Babylon.

In 614/615 B.C. the Medes, a tribal federation who lived in modern-day Iran, captured Ashur. Nabopolassar was, however, too late to help the Medes but he nevertheless signed a treaty with Cyaxares, the king of the Medes. Berossus, a Babylonian historian, tells us that the alliance between the Babylonians and the Medes was cemented by a royal wedding when the Babylonian crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar II, married a Median princess named Amytis. The United Medes and Babylonians then laid siege to Nineveh for three months and in May 612 B.C. Nineveh was captured.

After several military campaigns in Harran, the Assyrian king was expelled, but not yet defeated since he returned with the army of Egypt's Pharaoh Necho II (610 - 595 B.C.). Josiah, the king of Judah, tried to conquer the former kingdom of Israel (the ten tribes), which was at the time a part of the Assyrian Empire.

While Josiah was king, King Neco of Egypt led an army to the Euphrates River to help the emperor of Assyria. King Josiah tried to stop the Egyptian army at Megiddo and was killed in battle. (2 Ki.23:29 GNB)

At Carchemish on the banks of the Euphrates, the Babylonian crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar II, defeated Pharaoh Necho II in 605 B.C. That very same year Nabopolassar died. Nebuchadnezzar II carried on with his expansions and took over the former Assyrian possessions. From 2 Kings 24:7 we learn that Egypt retired to the Sinai desert leaving the Palestine coast in the hands of the Babylonians.

Nebuchadnezzar II captured Jerusalem in 597 B.C. appointing Jehoiakim as a vassal king to rule Judah. Jehoiakim, however, revolted and the city was captured for the second time in 587 B.C. Judah's population was thereupon deported to Babylonia, starting the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity of the Jews. The West was now safe except for Tyre that bravely resisted, holding out for a couple of years until it finally fell to the Babylonians in 585 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar's reign was successful over Babylon up until his death in 562 B.C. His son, Amel-Marduk (Evil-Merodach) who succeeded him was soon murdered and replaced by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, who reigned from 559 to 556 B.C. Neriglissar led a few military campaigns but despite his successes, he too was within a short space of time replaced by Nabonidus who obtained power by a coup d'état. Neriglissar was a rich man, yet a commoner and it is possible that the man behind the coup was the king's own son Belshazzar. Nabonidus, however, was not taken seriously – in the ancient Verse Account of Nabonidus, he is called a madman and a blasphemer because he preferred the cult of Sin in Harran above that of the Babylonian god Marduk.

Despite being unpopular, Nabonidus added large parts of Arabia to his empire. In 550 B.C. Cyrus, the king of the Persians, disposed of the last king of the Medes, Astyages, and in 547 B.C. he conquered Lydia, executed the Lydian king, Croesus, and added Lydia to the Persian Empire. In 539 B.C., with a joint Median and Persian army, Cyrus the Great captured Babylon whereupon the Neo-Babylonian Empire became part and parcel of the mighty Median/Persian Empire. It seems that Cyrus appointed a vassal king, Darius the Mede, to take control of Babylon.

THE MEDES

Evidence concerning the history of ancient Media is at best very scarce and the little we do have at our disposal is not always reliable. The evidence consists of some archaeological records, a few references in Assyrian and Babylonian cuneiform texts, the Persian Behistun inscription, the Histories recorded by Herodotus of Halicarnassus, the Persian history by Ctesias and a few references in the Old Testament. Unfortunately, the archaeological records are unclear, and the oriental texts contain very little substantial information. The histories written by Herodotus and Ctesias are not reliable and the references to the Medes in the Old Testament do not tell us much about this ancient nation.

What we do know is that the Medes were at some later time in their history a group of eastern tribes ruled by a king and their capital was Ecbatana, the modern-day Hamadan. The boundaries of ancient Media were also never completely fixed. On its west lies the Zagros mountains which formed the border with Assyria; to the north, it was separated from Armenia and the Caspian Sea by the Elburz mountains; south of it lies Elam and Persis and on its eastern side the Caspian Gate forms its border with Parthia. Media's territory was relatively small; from north to south the land stretched over about 600 miles, covering about 250 miles from east to west.

Media appeared in ancient history for the first time in the ninth century B.C. and is mentioned in inscriptions concerning Shalmaneser III, about 836 B.C. Until the seventh century B.C., they were dominated by the Assyrians and their rise to power was contemporary with the decline of the Assyrian Empire. The Medes gradually grew in power reaching such an extent that they could capture Ashur, the capital of Assyria, in 614/615 B.C. A few years later, in 612 B.C., they joined the Babylonians and captured Nineveh which event marked the end of the Assyrian Empire. In the years which followed, they were an important ally of Babylonia, but towards the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the Persians, under the leadership of Cyrus II (Cyrus the Great), became a powerful force. As a result, Media was conquered by the Persians in 549 B.C. However, this was not the end of the Medes. They combined forces

with the Persian Empire emerging as Medo-Persia and sacked Babylon in 539 B.C.

MEDO-PERSIAN (ACHAEMENID) EMPIRE

Although we have more historical information about the

Persian Empire, it is still not enough to construct a clear and precise history of this ancient empire. What follows is the general or “official” history (story) concerning the rise and fall of the Persian Empire.

There is little doubt that the Persian Empire was founded by Cyrus the Great. He became king in 559 B.C. and soon after, in 550 B.C. he defeated Astyages of Media. The exact size of the Median Empire is not known, but it probably included the regions of Cappadocia and Armenia in the west and Parthia and Hyrcania in the east.

A few years later, probably in 547 B.C., Cyrus added Lydia and Bactria to his kingdom. It is also possible that he led military campaigns in Sogdia and India. There is no doubt that he, with a joint force of Medians and Persians, captured the city of Babylon in 539 B.C. This military engagement is known as the Battle of Opis. Apparently, it was believed that the walls of Babylon were impossible to breach, so another plan had been devised to enter the city.

The Euphrates River runs through the city and where it flows through, namely underneath the walls, metal grates were installed under-water to prevent any intrusion. The Persians, however, diverted the river upstream which then had lowered the level of the water where it enters the city. This all happened while the inhabitants of the city were engaged in a Babylonian national feast. Cyrus's troops broke the metal grates, entered the city, and conquered the outlying areas of Babylon while most Babylonians in the city centre were unaware of the invasion.

Cyrus then built a residence for himself in Pasargadae on the site where he defeated Astyages, but in 530 B.C. he died in a battle with the Massagetae, a Scythian tribe. His son, Cambyses, took over the reign and conquered Egypt in 525 B.C. Three years later though revolt broke

out under the leadership of Gaumata resulting in the death of Cambyses. Many provinces followed suit and joined in the revolt, but Darius I, a distant relative of Cambyses, eventually restored the order in the kingdom. New countries were added to the empire which at the time extended from Macedonia in the west to Pakistan in the east, and from the Caucasus mountains in the north to the Libyan desert and the Persian Gulf in the south.

After Darius I, his son, Xerxes, took over the reigns, and under his rule, the expansion of the empire came to an end. In fact, some of the Greek regions became totally independent. Under the reign of his successors, Artaxerxes I (465 – 424 B.C.) and Darius II Nothus (423 – 404 B.C.), the empire, although static was the strongest power on earth.

When Darius II died, civil war broke out between his sons Artaxerxes II and the younger Cyrus, and in the South, Egypt became independent. After several attempts to reconquer the former satrapy, two of the generals of the new Persian king, Artaxerxes III, finally gained success when they forced the last pharaoh of independent Egypt, Nectanebo II, to flee (342/341 B.C.).

Artaxerxes III died and his successor, Artaxerxes IV, only reigned for a very short time before he was replaced by a distant relative, Darius III Codomanus (336 – 330 B.C.). The new king was successful in putting down several rebellions and at the same time, Alexander the Great, king of Macedonia, invaded Asia Minor. Darius III tried to stop the approaching Macedonians, but his armies were defeated at Issus in 333 B.C. The Persians, however, regrouped and built a new army, but two years later they too were defeated at Gaugamela. Darius III was murdered in 330 B.C. His death marked the end of a lineage of powerful sovereigns, also the end of the very influential Persian Empire.

THE GREEK (MACEDONIAN) EMPIRE

W

hen we think of the Macedonian Empire, the name and

fame of Alexander the Great first springs to mind. In fact, without his remarkable accomplishments, history might not have heard of a Macedonian Empire at all. On the other hand, if it were not for his father's insight and determination, Alexander would not have been known to us.

Alexander's father, Philip II of Macedon, reigned as an accomplished king and commander from 359 to 336 B.C. His accomplishments during this time set the stage for Alexander's victory over Darius III and the Macedonian conquest of Persia. When Philip II became king, Macedon was a weak and backward country and its inhabitants were, in the eyes of the haughty Greeks, a bunch of uneducated barbarians.

However, Philip took the undisciplined and ineffective Macedonian army and turned them into a formidable and efficient military force. With this new military machine, Philip eventually subdued all the territories around Macedonia as well as most of Greece. To secure his kingdom, he made use of bribery to gain support from his opponents, and if that did not give him the results he had sought, he would bombard them with all kinds of threats which in many cases resulted in warfare.

Unlike Greece, which was composed of many city-states, Macedonia (before Alexander the Great) was a primitive and backward monarchy. Its people spoke a Greek dialect, and it was believed that the country was only useful as a source for timber and pastureland. Philip II was appointed to administer the affairs of Macedonia until his nephew, Amyntas IV, would come of age, but Philip II assumed the throne for himself in 359 B.C. when he was only 23 years old. Apart from building a formidable army, he remade the capital city, Pella,

inviting poets, writers and philosophers to settle there. He asked the famous Aristotle to teach his son Alexander, and to make sure that his neighbours would not attack him, he invited their sons to be educated in Pella.

Philip married seven times, and the most famous of these marriages was to Olympias who became the mother of the man, Alexander III, who would conquer Persia. Alexander's mother was from a neighbouring region Epirus, and Philip was pressurised to marry a true Macedonian giving the kingdom a pure-blooded heir. A close friend of Philip succeeded in convincing him to marry his niece, Cleopatra Eurydice, who was supposed to provide the king with a suitable heir to his throne. Alexander was, however, not happy with this type of arrangement voicing his outrage at Philip and Cleopatra's wedding banquet for which behaviour he and his mother were temporarily exiled.

In 336 B.C. Philip II was murdered by his close friend and lover Pausanias. It was said that Olympias encouraged the young man to get rid of Philip but her supposed part in Philip's assassination has never been proven. As can be expected, Philip's new wife and child were murdered by Olympias, thereby eliminating any significant claimant to the throne and Alexander was without delay crowned king.

The young Alexander was trained to be a soldier and a skilled horseman, also to endure hardships such as forced marches. He was further taught to read and write and to play the lyre. This type of cultural training instilled in him a life-long love for reading and music. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, taught him for three years and his influence is seen in Alexander's later dealings with those he conquered. For instance, Alexander never forced the culture of Greece upon the inhabitants of the various regions he had conquered. He introduced Greek culture in the same way Aristotle used to teach his students. Apparently, Alexander had a skill with horses for it is said that he could tame the untameable.

As previously pointed out, Alexander's father made a great impact on the destiny of his son, but Alexander chose to see his success as ordained by divine forces. He claimed to have the status of a god referring to himself as the son of Zeus. His belief in his own divinity was instilled in him by his mother who apparently informed him of his virgin birth as she, in true mythological fashion, believed she was

miraculously impregnated by Zeus himself. Greek legend has it that his birth was associated with great signs and wonders such as a bright star that appeared over Macedonia that night and the destruction of the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus.

In 338 B.C. Alexander fought in the battle of Charonea. He was then only 18 years old, but he used his military skills to turn the battle into a decisive Macedonian victory over the Greek allied city-states. With the Greek city-states firmly under Macedonian rule, he embarked on the great campaign his father had been planning, namely the conquest of the mighty Persian Empire. According to Worthington:

Homer was Alexander's bible and he took Aristotle's edition with him to Asia...During his campaigns, Alexander was always intent on finding out everything he could about the areas through which he passed. He took with him an entourage of scientists to record and analyze this information, from botany, biology, zoology and meteorology, to topography. His desire to learn, and to have information recorded as scientifically as possible, probably stemmed from Aristotle's teachings and enthusiasm.⁶⁵

The army he took with him was made up of only 32,000 foot-soldiers and 5,100 cavalrymen. In 334 B.C. he crossed over into Asia Minor and took the city of Baalbek which he renamed Heliopolis. He then captured the Greek city Ephesus which was under Persian rule. He was now ready to attack the Persians head-on, which he did in 333 B.C. At the battle of Issus, he, against all odds, defeated the massive army of Darius III who fled, leaving his family behind. Alexander then went on, taking the cities Sidon and Aleppo before conquering Syria in 332 B.C. and Egypt in 331 B.C. He founded the city of Alexandria and was proclaimed a son of the god Zeus.

Although he conquered Egypt, Alexander did not impose his beliefs or behaviour upon the people. All he wanted was that they would keep the supply lines open to feed his troops, but this does not mean that he was not ruthless in suppressing and even annihilating those who dared to rise against his rule.

For example, because the city of Tyre was on an island, it was difficult to conquer. Alexander was so determined to conquer Tyre that he built a causeway from the mainland to the island. He then invaded

the city and because of their stubborn resistance he slaughtered Tyre's citizens and sold many of them into slavery. As time went by, the causeway he built collected silt and earth and so the island was fused to the mainland, forming part of Lebanon.

Although Alexander defeated the Persians in 333 B.C. at the battle of Issus, the Persians were not yet conquered. In 331 B.C. Alexander again met King Darius III on the battlefield at Gaugamela and again he defeated the overwhelming force of Darius III. Not long after this battle Darius III was assassinated by one of his own generals, Bessus, who was also his cousin. Alexander proclaimed himself the "King of Asia" moving on to capture the city of Susa. According to Diodorus Siculus and some other ancient historians, he, in 330 B.C., started a fire in Persepolis which destroyed the main palace and most of the city. This was Alexander's revenge for the burning of the Acropolis when the Persian King Xerxes invaded Greece in 480 B.C. With Persepolis in total ruins and stripped of all its treasures, Alexander marched on to Bactria and Sogdiana which he conquered with ease.

Many cities were founded by him and which were named after himself and so that he could further his public image as a god. Not being content to only be a king he adopted the grand title of Shah-an-Shah (King of Kings), a term used by the rulers of the first Persian Empire. He was also the monarch who introduced the Persian custom of proskynesis to the army (the act of bowing or prostrating oneself before a person of higher social rank) forcing those who addressed him to first kneel and kiss his hand.

Despite the successes of Alexander's campaigns, history tells us that not all his followers were completely satisfied with his deification and his adoption of Persian customs, with the result that many plans were made to assassinate him. Alexander was also known for his excessive consumption of alcohol and on separate events in 328 B.C. he, in his drunkenness, murdered both Cleitus and Callisthenes. Both of these victims were very vocal in their criticism of Alexander's adoption of Persian customs and although Alexander was known for being capable of great diplomacy in dealing with conquered rulers and peoples, he showed no tolerance for personal opinions conflicting with his own, especially when he was intoxicated. At one such time he hurled a javelin at Cleitus who died quickly. Callisthenes again, was sent to prison where he either died in confinement or was crucified.

Alexander also married a Bactrian noblewoman Roxana and in 327 B.C. he turned his attention to India. The Indian king, Omphis of Taxila, bowed to Alexander's authority without resisting him, but some of the Indian tribes strongly rose against the onslaught. Alexander, however, subdued these tribes in various battles throughout 327 and 326 B.C. Expressing his desire to march on, crossing the Ganges, troops refused to follow him. He finally gave in to their wishes, splitting his army in two and sending one-half back to Susa while marching with the other half through the Gedrosian desert. However, the harsh terrain and the military engagements he encountered on his way, took their toll and by 324 B.C. when he finally reached Susa, he had sustained considerable losses.

In Susa, many of his troops again objected to his adoption of Persian dress and manners, also his promotion of Persians above Macedonians in the army and to his order to merge Persian and Macedonian units. Alexander, in an immature, spiteful way responded by appointing Persians to prominent positions in the army and giving traditional Macedonian titles and honours to Persian units. When his troops backed down submitting to his wishes, he responded by returning the titles he had bestowed upon the Macedonians declaring a great communal feast where he dined and boozed with the army. He later dropped the custom of proskynesis for the army, yet continuing to behave like a Persian, rather than a Macedonian king seemingly proving the immense cultural influence the Persian civilisation had exerted on the ancient nations.

At the age of 32 years, and in June 323 B.C., Alexander died in Babylon after suffering from fever for ten days. There is much speculation about the cause of his death, through poisoning, malaria, meningitis and bacterial infection from drinking contaminated water, are being speculated. Plutarch said that, 14 days before his death, Alexander entertained his fleet admiral Nearcus and his friend Medius of Larissa in one of his long drinking sprees whereafter he was gripped with fever and from which he never recovered. Apparently, when he was asked who should succeed him, Alexander's reply was to the point: "The strongest."

He left no obvious heir neither did he appoint a successor. The uncertainty in continuance of his monarchy resulted in a period of

about forty years of internal conflict and destructive wars between leading generals and members of his family, collectively known as the Diadochi or the “successors.” Eventually, and because of the Battle of Ipsus, fought between rival successors in 301 B.C., Alexander’s kingdom was divided into four main kingdoms. Cassander ordered the execution of Alexander’s wife, son and his mother in order to consolidate his power as the new king of Macedonia. The kingdom of Cassander (around 358-297 B.C.), consisted of Macedonia, most of Greece, and parts of Thrace. The kingdom of Lysimachus (around 361-281 B.C.) included the regions of Lydia, Ionia, Phrygia and some parts of modern-day Turkey. Seleucus, who died in 281 B.C., founded the Seleucid Empire comprising of Syria, Babylon, Persia, and India. The fourth kingdom was the Ptolemaic Dynasty, founded by Ptolemy I, who ruled over Egypt, Palestine, Cilicia, Petra and Cyprus until the death of Cleopatra VII in 31 B.C.

Hellenic (Greek) influence continued to spread throughout the regions ruled by the Diadochi. Statues, architecture and inscriptions have been found in every locale. Greek language and literature influenced the thought and writing in all the regions. The Great Library at Alexandria in Egypt became the most important centre for learning in the ancient world.

Even after the rise of Rome and the Roman Empire the Greek language, customs, philosophy and culture spread from all the civilisations conquered by Alexander the Great and his generals to those residing in the East; then northwards to Europe through trade and also Roman conquests, resulting in the Hellenisation of a very large part of the ancient world and influencing virtually every culture of the modern world.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

According to legend, Rome was founded in 753 B.C. by the

twins Romulus and Remus, who were leaders of an invading tribe known as the Etruscans. Before this phase in history, Rome was a small and inconspicuous town on the banks of the river Tiber. About 100 years before the Etruscans invaded the city, they migrated from Asia Minor to Southern Italy. The Etruscans gradually expanded northwards from the Bay of Naples organising the backward Italic peoples in a loose confederation of Etruscan city-states. In 753 B.C. they subdued Rome, and the once free citizens of Rome were now ruled by the hated Etruscans.

It seems that from the very start Rome was bathed in violence. Apparently, Romulus had an argument with Remes which ended in Romulus killing his brother Remus. Having won the argument, Romulus named the new region after himself, i.e., Rome. The city or rather the small village, lacked fortification, so it was vulnerable to attack. Romulus put the conquered people to work on a massive building project and in a very short time, Rome grew from an insignificant village to the largest city in that area.

Romulus was the first of seven Etruscan kings to rule Rome. One of the most important features of the Etruscan dynasty was its increase of royal power. All the Etruscan kings were powerful, ruthless rulers. Although the inhabitants of Rome wanted to be free it should be noted that without the Etruscan influence, Rome would never have grown to a city of importance. The building projects of Romulus led to a rapid growth in population. The citizen's resentment of the kings who mistreated them so badly for almost 250 years led to rebellion and in 509 B.C., the last Etruscan king was expelled.

A Republican government was established in which all citizens would participate, and a decree was passed that there would be no more

kings in Rome. Next, they established a constitution with Roman Law becoming the way by which all citizens would enjoy protection from complete domination by the elite.

Senators were elected whose task it was to oversee Roman Law. The Roman people looked to their Senate for leadership and the Senate appointed two consuls who would rule as kings but only for one year at a time. At the end of their terms, the Senate would replace them with two new appointees. This new republican experiment turned out to be highly successful for it lasted from 510 B.C. until 3 B.C. - almost 500 years.

The history of the Republic involved continuous warfare. In the beginning, Roman power started as a defensive strategy for the Roman people were determined never to be conquered again. The infusion of Etruscan blood had turned the Romans into warriors. At first, they built up their armies to fend off any threat of invasion, but soon they were moving towards gaining control over neighbouring territories. In a span of about 100 years after the establishment of the Republic, they conquered all of Italy.

Their first attempt to expand their territory outside of Italy, however, was a failure. The Romans attacked the Gauls who, in 387 B.C. crossed the Alps, defeated the Roman army and captured and burned Rome (the city) to the ground. It took Rome 50 years to recover, and in the process transformation took place. They became a powerful military state. They regained their control of Italy and launched a series of wars – the Punic Wars – in which they eventually took control of northern Africa, Spain and the major islands of the Mediterranean.

Although Rome gave certain rights to those it had conquered, those who were brought to subjection by them were required to send taxes and troops to Rome. This way Rome was able to maintain a permanent military settlement in every land they had conquered. To reinforce these settlements, the Romans invested in ambitious building projects which included roads, aqueducts, temples, arenas and much more.

The response to any attempted revolt was swift and very harsh, and the combination of granting territories rights and citizenship, also the surety of a swift but harsh response to rebellion, were normally enough to ensure that Roman Rule would be obeyed. However, the

empire, in the end, had grown so large that in the final days of the Republic, Rome fell into constant chaos resulting in civil war.

Something had to be done to maintain control and the solution at that critical moment was to place all power in the hands of one talented person. They argued that an Emperor of Rome would put an end to the constant civil wars, bringing stability and prosperity to all Roman territories. The Republic then came to an end and a new era in which emperors came to rule then manifested, starting with Julius Caesar who acted as dictator, however, Rome's economy began to bloom again.

The birth of Christianity took place during the reign of the Roman Empire, and not just its birth, but also its growth erupting from a meagre and small beginning, branching out to one of the main religions of the world today.

Religion in the Roman Empire comprised of the practices and beliefs Romans regarded as their own along with umpteenth cults imported to Rome in one or other way, or adopted and practised by the population throughout its provinces. The Romans are known for the great number of deities they worshipped. As the empire conquered and dominated new territories, its policy, in general, was to absorb the deities and cults of other peoples rather than try and eradicate them.

Rome, therefore, promoted stability among diverse peoples by supporting their religious heritage and the building of temples to the honour of their local deities. Inscriptions throughout the empire record the side-by-side worship of local and Roman deities, including dedications made by Romans to local gods.

The Romans thought of themselves as highly religious, in fact, they even attributed their success as a world power to their collective piety and in maintaining good relations with the gods. There was no separation of church and state whatsoever. The priesthood of the state religion was replenished from the same social pool of men who were holding public office, and in the Imperial era, even the emperor held the position of Pontifex Maximus (the highest pontiff or priest).

Roman religion was then practical and contractual, based on the principle of giving to the gods whatever they may need or require and in exchange again receiving from the gods whatever they may expect to receive from them. Religion mostly depended on the knowledge of, and also the appropriate practice of prayer, ritual, and sacrifice,

therefore, not on faith or dogma. For ordinary Romans, religion clearly was a part of daily life. Each home had a household shrine at which prayers to the domestic gods were offered. In addition, neighbourhoods were filled with shrines and sacred places such as springs and groves. The Roman calendar too was structured around religious observances. In the Imperial era, as many as 135 days of the year were devoted to religious festivals and games, where men, women, slaves, and children all took part in a range of religious activities.

After the collapse of the Republic, state religion supported the new regime of the emperors. Emperor worship expanded to the extent that when an emperor died, he could be made a state divinity by a mere vote of the Senate. Rejection of the state religion was regarded as treason against the emperor, and it was naturally also the main reason for Rome's conflict with first, second and third century Christianity, a new religion which the Romans initially perceived as a form of atheism and superstition.

At the height of the empire, numerous cults were practised in Rome and in the provinces. The cults of Cybele, Isis, Epona, and of solar gods such as Mithras and Sol Invictus were freely practised. Some of these cults could be found as far north as Roman Britain. Because Romans had never been compelled to cultivate worship of one god or practising one cult only, religious tolerance was not an issue as it was for monotheistic cults.

Sporadic and sometimes brutal attempts were made to suppress those religions which seemed to have threatened traditional morality and unity. In Gaul, Roman citizens were at first forbidden to belong to the cult of the Druids and Druidism was consequently banned, however, Celtic traditions were reinterpreted within the context of imperial theology. A new Gallo-Roman religion was formed with its capital at the Sanctuary of the Three Gauls in Lugdunum (present-day Lyon, France).

Judaism, being monotheistic, seemed to have been a problem for Roman religious policy leading at times to compromise and the granting of special exemptions. Tertullian noted that the Jewish religion, unlike that of the Christians, was considered a legitimate religion. However, wars between the Romans and the Jews erupted when conflict, whether political or religious could not be controlled. For example, when Caligula (emperor 37 – 41) wanted to place a golden

statue of himself in the Temple in Jerusalem, a potential sacrilege and likely war were prevented only by his timely death. However, thirty years later the issues between Jerusalem and Rome could still not be resolved and, during the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Temple was subsequently destroyed, and the Jewish political power dispersed.

In the perception of Rome, Christianity emerged in Roman Judea as a Jewish religious sect in the first century. The religion gradually spread from Jerusalem, initially establishing major bases, first in Antioch, then Alexandria, and then over time throughout the empire as well as beyond. Imperially authorized persecutions were limited and sporadic, with the martyrdoms occurring mainly under the authority of local officials.

The first persecution, confined to the city of Rome, occurred under Nero. Tacitus reports that after the Great Fire of Rome (64) some citizens held Nero responsible for his attempt to deflect the blame from himself to the Christians. After Nero, Domitian (Emperor 81 – 96) was responsible for major persecutions. Diocletian initiated what was to be the most severe persecution of Christians, lasting from 303 to 311.

In the early fourth century, Constantine I became the first emperor to “convert” to Christianity. During the rest of the fourth century, Christianity became the dominant religion of the empire. Emperor Julian made a short-lived attempt to revive traditional and Hellenistic religion and to affirm the special status of Judaism, but in 380 (Edict of Thessalonica), under Theodosius I, Christianity became the official state church of the Roman Empire, to the exclusion of the rest.

From the second century onward, the Christian Church Fathers began to condemn the diverse religions practised throughout the empire collectively as pagan. Pleas for religious tolerance from traditionalists such as Senator Symmachus (402) were rejected, and Christian “monotheism” became a feature of Imperial domination. Christian “heretics,” as well as non-Christians, faced exclusion from public life and/or persecution. However, Rome's original religious hierarchy and many aspects of its pagan rituals were incorporated into Christianity. Many pre-Christian beliefs and pagan practices became part of Christian festivals and local traditions, and to such an extent that one might label the state religion of the fourth and coming

centuries as a true Christian-pagan mix of beliefs, dogma, philosophy, rituals and practices.

After many centuries of ongoing decay, the fathers of the Reformation succeeded in introducing some reforms, however, despite all the progress they made, they were either not able or willing to completely return to the gospel and faith “which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3). To this day many of the man-made doctrines of the so-called Catholic church fathers are embedded in the constitutions and statements of faith of almost all the non-Roman Catholic Christian churches, even those who claim to be fierce adversaries of Roman Catholicism.

In summary, then, Rome was first dominated by the tyrannical rule of the Etruscan kings. Then for a period of 500 years, it had achieved remarkable success as a Republic. By placing power in the hands of the people, via the Senate, all citizens could participate in government. Then when, for numerous reasons, the Republican system had failed, governance was placed into the hands of dictators known as "Emperors". After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, we see the emergence of the Holy Roman Empire in which the papacy occupied a dominant role.

PART III

Daniel Chapter 2

THE DREAM OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S "FORGOTTEN" DREAM

¹ In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. ² Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So, they came in and stood before the king. ³ The king said to them, “I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream.” ⁴ Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: “O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation.” ⁵ The king replied to the Chaldeans, “The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap. ⁶ “But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honour; therefore, declare to me the dream and its interpretation.” ⁷ They answered a second time and said, “Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation.” ⁸ The king replied, “I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm, ⁹ that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore, tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation.” ¹⁰ The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. ¹¹ “Moreover, the thing which the

king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh.” ¹² *Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.* ¹³ *So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain, and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them.* ¹⁴ *Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king’s bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon;* ¹⁵ *he said to Arioch, the king’s commander, “For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?” Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter.* ¹⁶ *So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.* ¹⁷ *Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter,* ¹⁸ *so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.*

THE SECRET IS REVEALED TO DANIEL

¹⁹ *Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven;* ²⁰ *Daniel said, “Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him.* ²¹ *“It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding.* ²² *“It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.* ²³ *“To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, For You have made known to us the king’s matter.”* ²⁴ *Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king’s presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king.”* ²⁵ *Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king’s presence and spoke to him as follows: “I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!”* ²⁶ *The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?”* ²⁷

Daniel answered before the king and said, “As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.²⁸ “However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed.²⁹ “As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place.³⁰ “But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

THE KING’S DREAM

³¹ “You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendour, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome.³² “The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze,³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.³⁴ “You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.³⁵ “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

DANIEL’S INTERPRETATION

³⁶ “This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king.³⁷ “You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory;³⁸ and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.³⁹ “After you, there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze,

which will rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ “Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. ⁴¹ In that, you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. ⁴² As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. ⁴³ And in that, you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. ⁴⁴ In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy.”

DANIEL PROMOTED

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. ⁴⁷ The king answered Daniel and said, “Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries since you have been able to reveal this mystery.” ⁴⁸ Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. ⁴⁹ And Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king’s court. (NASB)

COMMENTS

Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon, had a dream and the

contents of his dream were such that it greatly disturbed and confused him. From verse five onwards we get the impression that he could not remember the details of the dream. However, he knew that the dream was important, so important that it troubled his spirit. He was worried that the dream had some deeper meaning, therefore he was obsessed to know the details of his dream and of course its exact meaning. A good outcome would be pleasing and nothing to worry about. On the other hand, a bad outcome would be worrisome, but at least, feeling that something bad was lurking on the horizon, he would be able to adopt one or more strategies to lessen the impact of the assumed pending disaster. He, therefore, just had to know, at all cost, what he had dreamt and what the dream meant.

Kings in the time of Nebuchadnezzar probably had, as in his case, many magicians, sorcerers, astrologists and scientists who waited upon them and whose duty it was to keep the monarch happy. They were first and foremost there to amuse the king and his guests, advising him on all sorts of matters and keeping him informed about the plans of friend and foe. Many of them were supposed to have been blessed with foreknowledge of what the gods had in store for the king and his subordinates.

Nebuchadnezzar must have been pleased that he had a well-maintained pool of able men to which he could turn to should he so wished; a group of men able to share their capabilities and wisdom with Nebuchadnezzar without hesitation. The king, therefore, would have expected of them to tell him what he had dreamt and especially to interpret his dream in a proper manner. He, therefore, called the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, but he gave them an impossible task! They had to make known to him his forgotten

dream and of course, then interpreting it. He also made his assignment to them profitable: if anyone among them were successful, he would receive from the king's own hand, gifts and a reward, also great honour, however, if no one among them could fulfil his demands, all of them would be torn limb by limb and on top of it their houses would be made a rubbish heap.

From verse nine it is not clear if Nebuchadnezzar remembered his dream or not. All we know is that he did not trust his wise men to give him an honest and correct interpretation, that is if they were at least able to have known what he had dreamt. However, should they be able to tell his dream, only then would he trust their interpretation. Their answer to him, of course, was that it was impossible to do so:

There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh. (Da. 2:10-11 NASB)

Although Nebuchadnezzar knew that it was not what he wanted to hear. He was furious, and he straightway gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. All the wise men, including Daniel and his friends, were to be killed.

When Daniel heard of the king's decree, he approached and asked the king to give him some time and then he would declare and interpret the dream for him. From Daniel 2 we know that Nebuchadnezzar did grant Daniel his request. He did indeed give him some time to come up with an answer, but how much time we do not know. It can only be assumed that it must have been a few days.

Daniel clearly understood the impossibility of Nebuchadnezzar's demand. Surely, he was aware that no man on earth could tell the king what he had dreamt, but he also knew that the God of his fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who made a covenant with his people, the only true and living God, was able to do the impossible. He, without a trace of doubt in his heart, believed that his God would reveal to him what the king had dreamt and also what it meant.

Daniel, of course, had no intention asking God if it was His will to reveal the king's dream to him! He acted in faith knowing and

understanding that his God would not let him down. He again summoned his friends to join him in prayer, asking their God to intervene, coming through for them. Not surprisingly, God did intervene, and He did so timely, proving that He is indeed the God who answers when called upon.

The mystery was indeed revealed to Daniel at night in a vision. We can assume that Daniel saw in this vision the exact dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel then blessed and praised the God of heaven saying:

Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, For You have made known to us the king's matter. (Da.2:20-23 NASB)

Wisdom and indeed power belong to our God. God is in control. It is in His power and His power alone to change times and epochs. He even removes kings and rulers and He establishes others in their place. The wisdom, knowledge and understanding we have is only a gift from Him. Only God can reveal profound and hidden things. In Him is lightness and darkness flees before Him.

With this new revelation Daniel, who years ago, had left the land of Israel as an exile and a young slave boy, could then confidently go to the great king of Babylon, proclaiming the power and wisdom of his God to Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan king. He declared the salient truth in boldness of spirit:

1. No wise man, nor any conjurers, magicians or diviners can ever declare to the king what he had dreamt and what it meant.
2. There is a God in heaven – one God and not the gods that Nebuchadnezzar knew – who is able to reveal mysteries.
3. It is this living God – the God of Daniel and his friends – who has given the dream to Nebuchadnezzar.

4. The dream is about what will take place in the latter days.
5. The mystery has not been revealed to Daniel because he had more wisdom than any other man, but he received the revelation so that he could interpret it to the king.

From the aforesaid we can gather that God, in a way, did answer Nebuchadnezzar's concerns. The king was probably worried about what would happen to his kingdom in the time to come and while thinking about it, he fell asleep and God then gave him a dream.

Probably Nebuchadnezzar was not at all impressed with Daniel's opening statement. The other wise men had already told him that no man could satisfy his demands. As for the fact that it was God who gave him the dream and it is only the God of heaven who can reveal mysteries, alternatively that God wanted him to know and understand what would happen in future was, although interesting, still not what he wanted to hear. It was only when Daniel told him that God had revealed the mystery to him, Daniel, that the king must have sensed that something was by far different here.

I assume that it was only after this sequence of events that Nebuchadnezzar was able to understand Daniel's prologue to his dream and that it was then made known to him that all honour and praise belongs to the God of Israel. No man can then justifiably lay claim to honour and praise for himself just because of who he is and what position he occupies.

THE DREAM

Nebuchadnezzar in his dream saw a statue. It was very large and of extraordinary splendour and its appearance was awesome. The head of the statue was made of gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs were of iron, but its feet were partly of iron and partly of clay. Nebuchadnezzar was looking at this awesome statue until a stone was cut out without hands and this stone thereupon struck the statue on its feet crushing it. The iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold parts were all pulverized simultaneously, all becoming like chaff carried away by the wind, and leaving no trace of existence behind. Only the stone that had crushed

the statue remained, and it became a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

You, O KING, ARE THE KING OF KINGS

The phrase “king of kings” is a Hebraism denoting a supreme king, one who has other “kings” and rulers under his supreme reign. Nebuchadnezzar ruled over other kings and princes who paid tribute to him. It also implies that he was the most important king of his time. He ruled over many nations that were once independent kingdoms. It was not the intention of Daniel to flatter Nebuchadnezzar; it was simply a statement of truth. The phrase was later applied to the Son of God who is the supreme King of kings and Lord of lords.

To WHOM THE GOD OF HEAVEN HAS GIVEN THE KINGDOM

Immediately after Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar that he was the most important king of his time, he also reminds him that it was not because of his own talents, power or wisdom that he became “king of kings” but that it was rather the God of heaven, the one and only true God, who had conferred on him the sovereignty he had thus far enjoyed. The implication here is that God, who allowed Nebuchadnezzar to be the king, can at any time strip him of this honour if He so wishes.

WHEREVER THE SONS OF MEN DWELL, OR THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD, OR THE BIRDS OF THE SKY, HE HAS GIVEN THEM INTO YOUR HAND

This statement should not be taken literally. It merely means that he was ruling over the whole world, but “the whole world” does not mean the whole world (the globe) as we understand it today, but rather the “world” as known in his day and age, also the kingdoms and nations whom he conquered. This is common language applied in the Scriptures to the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian and Roman kingdoms. In reference to Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah prophesied as follows:

So says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel: So you shall say to your masters, I have made the earth, man, and the animals on the face of the earth, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed right to Me. And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant. And I have also given him the beast of the field to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the time of his own land comes. And then many nations and great kings shall enslave him. And it shall be, the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will punish, says Jehovah, with the sword and with the famine, and with the plague, until I have destroyed them by his hand. (Je. 27: 4-8 MKJV)

Albert Barnes says:

At the time referred to by Daniel, the sceptre of Nebuchadnezzar extended over all these realms, and the world was, in fact, placed substantially under one head.⁶⁷

Berossus, in Josephus, says:

He conquered Egypt, and Syria, and Phoenicia, and Arabia, and exceeded in his exploits all that had reigned before him in Babylon and Chaldea.^{31a}

THE KINGDOM REPRESENTED BY GOLD

YOU ARE THE HEAD OF GOLD

It should be kept in mind that it is not just Nebuchadnezzar himself who is the head of gold, but it is rather the whole Babylonian Empire. The head of gold, therefore, represents a vast empire and when compared to other kingdoms that will succeed this empire, they will in some or other way be inferior to (lower than) this empire as silver, bronze, iron and clay are inferior to, or less precious than gold. Daniel, however, did not say why his kingdom is represented by gold nor why those kingdoms who would follow his kingdom, were represented by progressively less precious materials.

It is indeed unfortunate that history has left us with only a few inadequate details of the life of Nebuchadnezzar, also of the events surrounding his reign. It may, therefore, not be possible to paint a clear picture of what had made his empire to be represented by gold in comparison to the others. However, the following may throw some light on the subject:

1. With respect to the kingdoms or empires dealt with in the dream, Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was the first in line. The Babylonian Empire was not the first kingdom in history, but the dream does not deal with the past, rather with what lies ahead. In this dream, according to Daniel, God answered Nebuchadnezzar's concerns about what was going to happen in the future. Nebuchadnezzar and his empire are then the first subject of what is marked here as the "future". It was, therefore, appropriate that his empire was to be depicted as the head of the statue he saw in his dream.
2. At the time Nebuchadnezzar was ruling over a vast domain and in this capacity, as ruler of the "world", he could indeed be referred to as the head of the nations. Babylon was then the central power of the pagan world and at the time it was the only empire that could claim to have been universal. Prior to Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom of Babylon, indeed for a very long period, had been dependent on Assyria. In fact, Babylon was subordinate to the

Assyrian Empire until Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar II, made the kingdom of Babylon independent of the Assyrians when he transferred the seat of the empire from Nineveh to Babylon in about 626 B.C.

3. Nebuchadnezzar inherited this mighty kingdom, but he also carried his own arms to distant lands. He subsequently conquered India, Tyre, and Egypt and as would appear, all of Northern Africa as far as the pillars of Hercules. With a few unimportant exceptions, all the known “world” was virtually subjected to him.
4. The appellation “head of gold” may have been given to him because of the splendour of his capital and the magnificence of his court. Babylon is called:

...the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency...
(Is. 13:19 KJV);

...the golden city... (Is. 14:4 KJV);

...the lady of kingdoms... (Is. 47:5 KJV);

...abundant in treasures... (Je. 51:13 KJV) and;

...the praise of the whole earth... (Je. 51:41 KJV)

Barnes says:

The conquests of Nebuchadnezzar enabled him to bring to his capital the spoils of nations and to enrich his capital above any other city on the earth. Accordingly, he gave himself to the work of adorning a city that should be worthy to be the head of a universal empire and succeeded in making it so splendid as to be regarded as one of the wonders of the world. His great work in adorning and strengthening his capital consisted, first, of the building of the immense walls of the city; second, of the tower of Belus; and third, of the hanging gardens.⁵⁷

5. It is also possible that “the head of gold” may have some reference to the character of Nebuchadnezzar himself. In Jeremiah 27:6 (KJV) he is called “servant of God” for he had to accomplish a mission given to him by God, even though he might not have been aware of this honour in that sense. Although he was proud and haughty, as most kings were, he was in many instances far better than those

who succeeded him, that is in world history. Think of the time when he praised and honoured the God of Israel! His conquests were numerous yet, as a conqueror, he was not marked with excessive cruelty like many other famous worriers before or after him. Also, instead of being just a conqueror, he also loved the arts of peace.

6. He strove to make his capital a beautiful and magnificent bastion, one that would truly be the “capital” of the world. In his conquest of Jerusalem, he did not destroy the city. He took what he thought would embellish his own capital, but his intention was that Jerusalem should be the chief city of an important province of his kingdom. He wanted Jerusalem to be reigned by one who was closely allied to the king who had reigned there when he captured the city.

It is, however, true that he, during the second invasion of Israel, destroyed Jerusalem and burned down the Temple, yet he did so because of Zedekiah's rebellion against him. See Jeremiah 28 for an account of why Zedekiah was persuaded to rebel against the Babylonian rule. Had the leadership of Israel listened to what God had communicated to them through Jeremiah, this second invasion, probably, would not have taken place and Jerusalem and the Temple would then not have been destroyed.

7. The “head of gold” referring to the Babylonian Empire, must also be considered in its relation to the redemption of mankind. All history, especially when it has a direct impact on the children of God, can indeed be grouped under two aspects (ways), namely, (1) in its secular bearing and, (2) in its relation to the redemption of the world. In its secular bearing, it has great and important usage, such as to furnish lessons for world leaders, showing the progress of society, illustrating the effects of wicked behaviour and immorality, the evils of anarchy, ambition and war and even showing what are the best methods to be applied by civil government.

All the above is good and well, however, in evaluating the events of history in relation to the work of redeeming mankind, it is here where it rises to its most important value. Fact is the rise and fall

of empires and nations, the conquests and defeats of times past, may all have had an important bearing on the redemption of man. It is just as though this was designed to position the world properly, that is for the coming of the Prince of Peace and/or to prepare the way for the final triumph of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Every great person in history, be it a monarch, a warrior, a statesman or any other type of leader who has played an important role in world affairs had indeed become, to a greater or lesser degree, an agent who contributed to preparing the way for the introduction of the Mediator acting between God and man. It seems that Nebuchadnezzar was raised up under the overruling hand of God to accomplish the following:

- a. To inflict punishment on the people of God for their numerous and unending idolatry. He led his army to the land of Israel, captivated its people and settled them in Babylon. He burned the temple, destroyed the city and laid the land waste.
- b. He was the instrument God used to, in effect, cleanse the Israelite's of their idolatry. The chastisement was successful in that, after the Babylonian exile, the Israelite's never again sank into a state of full-scale idolatry. Yes, there may have been individuals/groups who from time to time did lapse into idolatry, but as a nation, they have, overall, been preserved from it. More than two and a half millennia have since passed. In the interim, they have been wanderers and exiles in all the countries of the world. They have been persecuted, ridiculed and oppressed because of their religion as no other nation has ever been. They have been placed under all sorts of indictments to conform to religions around them, and yet, as worshippers of Yahweh (Jehovah), the God of Israel, they kept their integrity and nothing, neither promises nor threats, hopes or fears, life or death, could persuade the Hebrew people to bow the knee to an idol god.

THE KINGDOM REPRESENTED BY SILVER

AFTER YOU, THERE WILL ARISE ANOTHER KINGDOM

That is subsequently, however, it does not mean that the second kingdom would “immediately” succeed Nebuchadnezzar’s own reign. The Medo-Persian Empire did not come into existence until many years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. The overthrow of the Babylonian Empire occurred during the reign of Belshazzar, who was a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon was ruled by Evil-Merodach and when he died, Neriglissar took over the reign. Belshazzar, the last king of the Babylonian Empire, again took over the reign from Neriglissar. The primary meaning of “after you” is that another kingdom would succeed over the kingdom of which Nebuchadnezzar was then the monarch and this new kingdom would be “inferior” to his kingdom and so much so that it may be represented by silver as compared to gold.

The language in this statement implies something different from an ordinary or automatic succession of a ruler of the same dynasty because it would then mean a mere continuance of one and the same kingdom. The statement rather refers to a change of empire and the mere fact that another different kingdom would arise, implies that there would be some sort of revolution or conquest by which the existing empire would have lost (was going to lose) its control or would even cease to exist.

The kingdom in question was undoubtedly the Medo-Persian Empire founded by Cyrus the Great who conquered and sacked Babylon. This new kingdom or empire continued under the reign of several of Cyrus’s successors until Alexander the Great defeated the Persians in 333 B.C.

Daniel did not elaborate on why the second kingdom was represented by silver which is less valuable than gold. It can then only be learned from what history tells us about this kingdom and it seems that there was a general decline in the character of the monarchs of this

empire as well as the general condition of the empire as a whole. Calvin maintained that it refers to degeneracy (corruption/immorality). Others have supposed that it relates to the duration of the kingdom since it continued for no more than two hundred and forty years but, it is not a sound argument since the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors was indeed much shorter. Still, others suppose that it means that the Babylonian kingdom enjoyed more rest and tranquillity. Another interesting point of view is that it refers to a milder and more humane treatment of the Jews by the Babylonians than what they had endured under the Persians, although this statement is questionable. Whether the above opinions meet the circumstances of the case is, of course, debatable.

We should never suppose or accept that this kingdom was inferior to the Babylonian kingdom in all aspects. Had it been, it would never have grown to a kingdom which ruled over a much larger territory than that of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. However, it must have had certain characteristics in its make-up which would have, appropriately, caused it to be symbolised by silver as opposed to gold. On the other hand, it is certainly possible, even probable, that it had other characteristics that might have made it more superior than the kingdom it had succeeded. Therefore, the inferiority did not necessarily relate to the power, the riches or the territorial extent of the Medo-Persian Empire. In Ezra, Cyrus speaks of his empire in language that strongly resembles what is applied to the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar. He says:

Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth. (Ezra 1:2 KJV)

To the kingdom of Babylon, Cyrus added the kingdoms of Media, Lydia, Cappadocia and almost all of Asia Minor. As to its wealth, we must remember that when Cyrus invaded Babylon, he took possession of all the wealth of Babylon and on top of it, he added all the spoils of his conquests to the already attained treasures of Persia and Media. In considering the "inferiority" of this kingdom and which then appropriately depicts it, "by silver rather than gold", it is to be borne in mind that this type of representation should cover "the whole kingdom" in all its successive reigns, and then not only the kingdom as it existed under the administration of Cyrus. If we look at the succession of kings who occupied the Persian throne, we must acknowledge that Cyrus was

a worthy king. Not only was he a brave and successful conqueror, but he was also a mild, able and upright civil ruler.

However, this kingdom was “inferior” in comparison to some of the remarkable military defeats of the successors of Cyrus. The Babylonian Empire was renowned for its military victories and by which it had carried its arms around the then known world. On the other hand, the Medo-Persian Empire, after the reign of Cyrus, is remembered for successive defeats.

It seems that no other kingdom ever undertook so many foolish projects in its attempt to conquer other nations. A lack of intelligent planning resulted in many failures. For instance, when Cambyses succeeded Cyrus, he invaded Egypt, but his conduct in carrying on the war was such that he was regarded as a madman.

It is said that he, for some or other reason, was enraged against the Ethiopians and he decided to go for them. He marched south to Thebes in Upper Egypt, and there he made the irrational decision to detach fifty thousand men from his army with the instruction to go out against the Hammonians. He gave his troops specific orders to destroy the Hammonians and to burn down the temple of Jupiter Hammon. However, after a few days of march in the desert, they were overwhelmed in the sands by a strong wind whereupon they all perished. In the meantime, Cambyses marched with the rest of his army southwards with the intention to invade and conquer Ethiopia, but with disastrous consequences.

To avoid starvation, they devoured all their pack animals and when nothing was left to feed on, they were eventually forced to designate every tenth man of the army to be killed and eaten. In these deplorable circumstances, Cambyses returned to Thebes, having lost a great part of his army in this wild expedition. During the continuance of this kingdom, several disastrous expeditions to Greece occurred and many battles were consecutively lost. In this respect, there was clear proof of its inferiority to the Babylonian kingdom.

Another sign of inferiority of this kingdom is found with respect to its growing degeneracy of character and morals. From the time of Xerxes, the symptoms of decay and corruption began to show. The national character gradually degenerated, as the citizens became corrupted by luxury. To fight their battles the army made more and

more use of mercenary troops. The kings submitted to the control of their wives and they indiscriminately promoted some dubious characters to high-ranking posts. The satraps, for instance, who were supposed to look after civil matters, began to usurp military authority.

Furthermore, the kingdom showed inferiority by the gradual weakening of its power caused by internal conflict and strife. The power and authority of the central government gradually declined while the independence of the provinces increased. From the time of Darius Nothus (423 B.C.) who apparently was a weak, effeminate and indolent prince,

the satraps of the distant provinces paid only nominal obedience to the king. Many of them were, in fact, sovereigns over the countries over which they presided, and carried on wars against each other.⁶⁷

As the power of the kingdom became weaker, it was preparing the way for the easy conquests over the Persian kingdom by Alexander the Great. The gradual degeneracy and weakening of the kingdom befit the depiction of a kingdom that would indeed be one that was “inferior” to that of the Babylonian kingdom. Therefore, the reference to it as silver compared to gold.

One should, however, not lose sight of the fact that this kingdom played an important role in the history of the religions of the world and the redemption of man. It is often referenced in the Scriptures like in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and some of the minor prophets too. The following is a summary of some of the events that had a bearing on the progress of religion and its advancement:

1. The overthrow of Babylon who for such a long time had kept the people of God in exile.
2. The return of the exiles to their own land under the decree of Cyrus, Ezra 1:1.
3. The rebuilding of the temple under the same decree and favoured by the successors of Cyrus.
4. The preparation for the coming of the Messiah. The prophet Haggai says that God will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and God shall fill His house (the temple) with glory.

There was a reason that this kingdom should receive such a distinct

notice in the Scriptures. Some of the most important historical events connected to Judaism occurred under the reigns of Cyrus and his successors. Maybe no other period in the history of the world experienced the hand of God in the way that He had influenced and directed the minds of those pagan rulers to be favourable to the oppressed children of God.

THE KINGDOM REPRESENTED BY BRONZE

A THIRD KINGDOM OF BRONZE

The parts of the image that referred to this kingdom were the belly and thighs, and it was made of bronze. Although Daniel did not say that it was inferior to the first and second kingdoms it can without a doubt be deduced that its position in the image (belly and thighs) and its substance (bronze) signals inferiority when compared to the kingdom that had preceded it.

I have no doubt that this third kingdom was the empire founded by Alexander the Great commonly known as the Macedonian Empire. In fact, this is the opinion of many, if not, most of the recognized biblical commentators. It should be noted that the reference is not just to the empire during the reign of Alexander himself, but it embraced the whole empire as founded and arranged by him and his successors until it was succeeded by another universal empire – the fourth kingdom.

For those who might doubt that the third kingdom denoted by bronze was the Macedonian Empire, it should be noted, firstly, that it is a historical fact that Alexander the Great subdued the Medo-Persian Empire and the empire founded by him covered at least the same territory previously dominated by the Persians. It was understood to be a universal kingdom. Secondly, Alexander's empire is elsewhere more than once referred to by Daniel and as a matter of fact, in the same order. These other instances will be dealt with later in this book. It is also interesting to note that the Greeks were distinguished for their “brazen armour” and some of the ancient writers referred to them as “brazen-coated Greeks”.^{28a}

WHICH WILL RULE OVER ALL THE EARTH

This is a common description of Alexander's empire. He commanded that he should be called “the king of all the world”.

Having received the empire, he ordered himself to be called the king of all lands and of the world.^{33a}

Diodorus Siculus says that he received envoys from all countries:

*Now from practically all the inhabited world came envoys on various missions, some congratulating Alexander on his victories, some bringing him crowns, others concluding treaties of friendship and alliance, many bringing handsome presents, and some prepared to defend themselves against accusations.*¹³

Arrian remarks that,

*indeed it was especially evident both to himself and to those about him that he was lord of all the land and the sea.*³

In the first chapter of the first book of Maccabees the author says:

And it came to pass, after that Alexander, the son of Philip the Macedonian, who first reigned in Greece, had overthrown Darius, the king of the Persian and Medes, he fought many battles, and took the strongholds of all, and slew the kings of the earth; and he went through even to the ends of the earth; and took the spoil of many nations; and the earth was quiet before him.

The phrase “which will rule over all the earth” is therefore very appropriate. This kingdom or empire embraced all that was anciently included in the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, plus all that had been added to that empire by Cyrus, as well as all that Alexander had added to it by the dominions he inherited along with his own conquests in other places. Almost all the known world except for those territories held by the slowly rising new power was under the rule of this young king.

The question, however, is whether this refers to the kingdom of Alexander during his own life only or whether it also embraced the succession of dynasties until the Romans appeared on the scene. The following inferences favour the extended empire:

1. As we have seen in the discussion of the two previous empires – Babylonian and Medo-Persian – they embraced not only the kingdom under its founder but rather its entire continuance from the time that it was founded up until the time when it was

overthrown by another ruler who also had a lofty goal to establish a universal kingdom. The same principles of interpretation should then also apply to the Macedonian kingdom.

2. Although it is true that when Alexander died the kingdom, he founded was divided among four of his generals and that, from this division, had sprung forth two reigns – the Seleucidae in Syria and the Lagidae in Egypt – it was, in fact, one kingdom.

Newton says:

Their kingdom was no more a different kingdom from that of Alexander than the parts differ from the whole. It was the same government still continued. Those who governed were still Macedonians. All ancient authors spoke of the kingdom of Alexander and of his successors as one and the same kingdom. The thing is implied in the very name by which they are usually called, the “successors of Alexander.” ‘Alexander being dead,’ says Josephus, ‘the empire was divided among his successors,’ and ‘After the death of Alexander,’ says Justin, ‘the kingdoms of the East were divided among his successors’ and he still denominates them Macedonians, and their empire the Macedonian.^{43b}

We have shown that the kingdoms of Babylon and Medo-Persia contributed to the progress of the world and the redemption of man. In the same way, the Macedonian kingdom was also designed under the overruling hand of God to contribute to the progress of the redemption of humanity and to help prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

The Macedonian kingdom continued from the overthrow of Darius Codomanus by Alexander in 333 B.C. to the conquest of Syria and the East by the Romans under Pompey in about 66 B.C. During this period of 267 years, one event that affected the interests of Christianity and helped to prepare the way for its rapid spread is worth mentioning. That was the extensive distribution of the knowledge of the Greek language.

Alexander's army was mainly composed of Greeks. Therefore, the Greek language was extensively spread over the countries subdued by Alexander, and which were governed by his successors. Greek, especially Koine Greek, became the popular tongue, a universal language understood by all. The Hellenisation of the known world made the introduction and spreading of the gospel easier, in that there

was a common language in most of the countries in which the gospel was proclaimed. Undoubtedly God had prepared the way for more easy and rapid distribution of the new gospel!

The translation of the Old Testament into Greek was another important event which took place during the continuance of this kingdom. The Hebrew language ceased to be spoken in its purity after the Babylonian exile. The spreading of the Old Testament Scriptures in the Hebrew tongue subsequently would not have been successful. There was a need for a translation into a language that most people could understand and by its translation into Greek the Scriptures would have become extensively known. Preachers of the Christian religion could now interpret and explain the prophecies of the Old Testament and especially those concerning the coming Messiah. The Greek language then made a huge contribution to the distribution of the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures among both Jew and Gentile.

During the reign of the Macedonian kingdom, events of great importance took place which preserved the Jewish people in times of persecution, saving Jerusalem and the temple from destruction and annihilation. One such event occurred when Alexander threatened to destroy Jerusalem. During his capture of Tyre, the Jews refused to furnish him with supplies for his army because they were bound to show allegiance to Darius.

Alexander understandably was furious, and thereupon marched to Jerusalem with the intent to destroy the city. It is said that Jaddua, the high priest, went out to meet him, dressed in his full high priestly garments, the priests accompanying him, all geared in their white priestly dress. Apparently, Alexander was very impressed by the scene and to the surprise of all, he spared the city and the temple.

When asked by Parmeno why he did not proceed to destroy Jerusalem, he said that he had seen this person in a dream – probably referring to the high priest – who had directed him to lay aside all anxiety about his planned expedition to Asia. This person promised Alexander that God would give him victory over the empire of the Persians. According to the story, Jaddua showed him the prophecies of Daniel confirming that he would conquer the East. Alexander offered sacrifices in the temple and granted the Hebrews the freedom of their country and the exercise of their laws and religion. Whether this is a

fable or not, it is still a fact that Alexander did not destroy Jerusalem or the Temple!

Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the later successors of Alexander, launched severe persecutions against the Jews in the time of the Maccabees. Multitudes of Jews were slain by Antiochus and his troops. Jerusalem was taken and the Temple defiled. Three years after Jerusalem was subjugated by Antiochus (168 B.C.) he commanded Apollonius to march against Jerusalem with the intention to vent his wrath upon the Jews.

It is said that when the Jews were assembled in their synagogues, he let loose his forces on them with a command to slay all the men. All the women and children were to be captured and sold as slaves. After this, he plundered the city, demolished the houses and broke down the walls. With the ruins of the demolished city, he built a strong fortress on the top of a hill in Jerusalem in a place overlooking the Temple and established a strong garrison in it. From this place, attacks were made on all who were going up to the Temple to worship.

The Temple was continually defiled with all sorts of filth, both physical and spiritual. Consequently, the Jews abandoned it and the daily sacrifices came to an end. In a heroic effort to deliver the Jews from this insane persecution, the city and the Jewish nation were delivered by the valour of Judas Maccabeus and in the manner as described in the first book of Maccabees.

THE KINGDOM REPRESENTED BY IRON

T

he fourth kingdom is represented in the image, by the legs of

iron and the feet which were partly iron and partly clay. So, what kingdom does this part of the image represent? In general, commentators are split between two leading opinions. The first being that it refers to the Roman Empire and the second that it refers to the kingdoms or rather dynasties that immediately succeeded the reign of Alexander the Great, namely that of the Seleucidae and Lagidae (Syria and Egypt). One of the leading commentators of this opinion is Professor Stuart, who says:

The legs and feet were symbols of that intermingled and confused empire, which sprung up under the Grecian chiefs who finally succeeded him.^{54a}

Barnes,⁶⁷ on the other hand, says that the common opinion has been that the reference is to the Roman Empire. In support of this opinion the following needs to be taken note of:

1. The design of the image Nebuchadnezzar saw, was such that it symbolised the succession of great monarchies, of which his was the first, and those who succeeded his kingdom would then precede the ultimate Kingdom that was never to be destroyed namely the eternal kingdom of heaven. These kingdoms would also play an important part in preparation of the world for the coming of the heavenly kingdom. The magnitude of the Roman Empire and the important role it played in preparing the world for the appearance of Jesus and His Kingdom is just too important to be ignored.
2. It should be realised that this fourth kingdom was to be in existence at the time “when a stone will be cut loose out of the mountain” and that during the reign of that kingdom or under it,

“the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed”. Fact is that the kingdoms of the Seleucidae and the Lagidae – the “intermingled and confused empires that sprang up” after Alexander the Great – had ceased to exist before that time, having been supplanted by the Roman Empire.

3. If the opinion held by Stuart is correct, then it implies that one kingdom was represented in the image by two different metals plus clay – brass, iron and clay. As have been shown previously, we know that the Babylonian kingdom was represented by gold, the Medo-Persian by silver and the Macedonian by bronze. It is also known that the empire founded by Alexander and which continued through his Syrian and Egyptian successors was referred to by the ancient people as one kingdom – a “Greek” dynasty. Therefore, if bronze is attached to the Greek kingdom, then it would not be logical to depart from the method of interpreting the other portions of the image such as applying “iron” to any portion of the “Greek” empire.
4. In applying the term “iron” to the fourth kingdom it evidently means that the kingdom represented by it would be distinguished by a strength greater than those of its predecessors. No one can dispute the fact that iron is by far stronger than bronze, silver and gold. It is also known that the confused reigns immediately following Alexander’s reign were in no ways stronger than that of Alexander’s own empire or, for that matter, the kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Babylon. On the other hand, the power of the Roman Empire was superior to all its predecessors and therefore it is appropriate to represent it as iron in comparison with bronze, silver and gold.
5. The design of the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar seems to represent a few kingdoms or empires which all would be universal empires, and which should then follow each other successively before the advent of Jesus the Messiah. The Roman Empire controlled a vast territory in the West as well as in the East capturing about the same territory as that of the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians and the Macedonians. It could truly claim, like any ancient sovereignty, the title of a “universal” empire. In fact, no other kingdom, before or after it, have ever existed and to which such title could justifiably be ascribed than to the Roman Empire.

THIS KINGDOM SHALL BE STRONG AS IRON

"...inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron breaking everything to pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. (Da. 2:40 NASB)

Any observer of history should have no difficulty perceiving this description as being applicable to the Roman Empire. Apart then from all its other characteristics, it is probably best known for its strength exerted and with which no other nation could compete.

Gibbon says:

The arms of the Republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid steps to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the ocean; and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the "iron" monarchy of Rome.^{23a}

Rome conquered kingdoms, reducing them to provinces and in the process ended their existence as separate kingdoms. This empire abolished the independence of those kingdoms who fell before its might. It trampled upon the power and dignity of all other states and with its awesome militaristic strength, Rome forced all of them into complete subjection.

The methods applied by Rome to crush the slightest resistance, distinguished this empire from all other empires that had paved the way for it to reign in later times as "invincible". In its battles stretching over many centuries, Rome never ceased to beat and bruise all who stood up to it but, in its victorious march to success, millions were slain.

THE FEET AND TOES, PARTLY OF POTTER'S CLAY AND PARTLY OF IRON

It should be noted that Daniel did not refer to the feet and toes as another kingdom that would succeed the kingdom symbolised by iron. Rather he referred to the outgrowth of the same kingdom. This is clear from the fact that there is no new substance introduced and of which the feet and toes are wholly made up. However, the core substance of the kingdom is changed to that of iron mixed with potter's clay. That is,

a foreign element will be introduced which will not fully bond with the original material. The number "ten," which may be regarded as the sign of the end period of this empire, lies in the toes. In other words, this last empire, whichever way it may be construed, is one that will split by itself into multiple parts or sub-kingdoms.

The text suggests that the feet and the toes were composed of both iron and clay. In other words, the iron and the clay intermingled, and it was, therefore, not a homogeneous material. The iron and the clay also could not, as in the case of other metals, be fused into one solid compound. Iron and clay can just never be mixed to form a strong and lasting substance. Clearly, the idea is that the empire referred to here would be a fusion of more than one element that could never be blended into one.

IT WILL BE A DIVIDED KINGDOM,

but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay.

Some commentators believe that "divided" here refers to the time when the Roman Empire was divided into two geographical parts, East and West. We learn from history that by A.D. 285 the Roman Empire had enlarged so much that it by then had become almost impossible to govern all the provinces from the central empirical seat in Rome. Emperor Diocletian divided the empire into two geographical parts with the western part governed from Rome and the eastern part governed from Byzantium (later Constantinople). Both sections were equally known as "The Roman Empire". If "divided" in this phrase refers to a physical split in the kingdom, it will have to refer to the period covered by the legs of iron, that is before the iron was mixed with clay.

We should not forget that from the time when Diocletian divided the empire into two geographical areas, until the time of its so-called fall, the Roman Empire was still only one empire. The only thing that changed was the way in which the vast empire was controlled. Daniel explicitly says that the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay. Therefore, this phrase cannot refer to the division of the empire into two regions, East and West.

Another hypothesis of the above phrase is that it does not necessarily mean that the kingdom would be divided into many separate parts, but rather that there would be diversity in its internal composition. In other words, there would be elements of great power (the iron) as well as elements of absolute weakness, meaning some characteristic within the component that could never blend with the element of strength and power. It would then not be of the same substance as that of the legs, which were made of iron alone. However, there would still be power and strength and no matter what weakness there might be, the power of the empire would still be apparent. However, even though this hypothesis explains the mixture of iron and clay it fails to explain the full meaning of the toes.

This far we have had four major kingdoms, each one of them symbolised by a different material. A more logical hypothesis, however, of the toes would be that they represent the extension of the fourth kingdom, but then this once strong and mighty kingdom would be divided into many smaller sub-kingdoms and whose composition would be inferior to the kingdom from which they had sprung forth. They would not have the same power nor would they work together.

Whatever the element of weakness, symbolised by the clay, may be, cannot, with absolute certainty, be determined. The explanation given by Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar implies that the “weakness” would come from some external force:

And as you saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mix themselves with the seed of men. But they shall not cling to one another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. (Da. 2:43 MKJV)

The English Standard Version reads:

As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.

Those commentators who believe that the fourth kingdom refers to the kingdoms that emerged after the death of Alexander, reason that this Scripture refers to the inter-marriages of the Ptolemies and the Seleucidae – two of the four post-Alexandrian kingdoms. However, it

does not make sense, since both were Macedonians and there was no natural incompatibility such as is suggested by the incompatibility of iron and clay. Since clay is inferior to iron, it implies that one of the two kingdoms (Ptolemies and Seleucidae) must have been inferior to the other and yet the advocates of such interpretation refrain from explaining which is “the clay” and which is the governing power or race mingling with them. Further, it did not signal the end of the Greek rule, but rather its beginning.

The “mixing with one another in marriage” is rather a reference to the infusion of barbarous races into the midst of a civilised race. The intrusion into the Roman Empire of the Germanic tribes, the Arabs and the Turks, is an interpretation that makes more sense in explaining the mix of iron and clay.

For those who have difficulty with the number “ten,” one should not necessarily make it an absolute number. However, it should be considerably more than four (the number for the successors of Alexander), but not so numerous as to suggest an indefinite multitude. The fact that the toes were part of the same portion of the image seems to indicate that these “ten” divisions were coexisting at the same time. The Macedonian kingdoms that succeeded the reign of Alexander certainly also coexisted at the same time and they were also individual parts of the same empire, but they were not generally more than four. The state of matters under the Holy Roman Empire, which was in effect an extension of the West Roman Empire, is a better fit to the symbol of the “ten toes”.

I believe that the legs of iron apply to the Roman Empire and the toes of iron mixed with clay is a symbol of its extension, known as the Holy Roman Empire. The mighty Roman Empire, throughout its long history, was distinguished for the vigour with which it carried out its plans in order to become a universal dominion. As years became centuries slowly but surely an element of “weakness”, symbolised by clay, infiltrated this mighty dominion.

The intermingling with nations of other languages, laws and customs constantly tended to weaken and divide the kingdom. It should be noted that the three kingdoms that preceded the Roman Empire were, in comparison, homogeneous. In the fourth kingdom there was something peculiar that distinguished it from the others. The predominant feature of the first three kingdoms was that they were

“Oriental”. Yes, the Babylonian, Medo-Persian and Macedonian kingdoms comprised of different nations and people, but in general, they were of the same character. There was not an intermingling with foreign nations that could produce disturbing elements or undermine the strength of the empire. In the Roman Empire there was definite intermingling of other nations and languages and although it always remained “The Roman Empire” the influences of other nations, the clay uniting with iron, contributed to its decline.

The important role that the Roman Empire played in the history of mankind's redemption, therefore, can never be dismissed. It played an enormous part in preparing the world for the coming of Jesus the Christ, and the birth and growth of Christianity. The Roman Empire enjoyed supremacy when Jesus made His appearance in Judea and it was under its reign that He, the Son of God, was put to death. Also, under and during its reign, the new Christian religion was spread throughout the “world”. It would, therefore, be appropriate to refer to some specific things that this fourth kingdom accomplished, and which played a salient role in establishing the next kingdom, the one that was never to be destroyed, the one that would be ruled by an everlasting King. The following is worth taking note of:

1. The world was brought under the rule of one universal kingdom, and this made it easier for the propagation of the Christian religion. The means of communication from one part of the world to the other had been extended by the Romans, and communication became easier. Those who were entitled to the privileges of citizenship could claim protection in nearly every part of the world. Ordinary people, such as those who proclaimed the gospel of Jesus, could move around with much greater ease.
2. As distant provinces and nations became subjected to Roman power, the world, at last, was in a relative state of general peace.
3. It was so arranged by God, in His Divine counsel, that under Roman rule the Son of God would be put to death and that by His death He would make atonement for the sins of the world. Jesus was to be killed, not at the hands of His own countrymen – although they condemned Him – but by the hands of foreigners and under their authority. Jesus predicted this in the Scriptures:

See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day. (Matt. 20:18-19 ESV)

It was designed by God to be this way, and this is one important reason why Judea and the rest of the world had to be brought under the Roman yoke. The pagan world, represented by the Romans, as well as the Jewish community, thus had an equal part (guilt) in the execution of our Lord and Saviour. Jesus truly then died for all the world – Jews and Gentiles.

Jesus's death thus became not only a Jewish affair and in which Judea alone was interested but it was an affair of the world. When the gospel was preached at Rome, it was something of which Rome itself was part of, for, under the authority of Rome, Jesus had been crucified. Another point of interest is that the Romans established the “innocence” of Jesus. Pilate found no fault in Him. In proclaiming the gospel, it was of utmost importance to be able to affirm this throughout the world. It can then never be claimed that Jesus violated the laws and that He therefore had deserved to have been killed for Pilate himself proclaimed His innocence.

4. The Romans played another important part in the Christian religion, and that was by destroying Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple. Its destruction brought an end to the rites and ceremonies of the Jews. When Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead, on the third day, the ancient sacrifices lost their efficacy, for in Christ Jesus the Law was completely fulfilled. His death replaced all the sacrifices of the Law and in Him, and Him alone, redemption is to be found. There was no more need of the Temple, the altar and the priesthood.

It was necessary that the ancient rites should cease, and in about thirty years after the final and everlasting sacrifice was made, the Romans were the instrument used to destroy the city, the altar and the Temple, and the daily sacrifice came to an end. The role of the fourth kingdom, therefore, was truly important in the

introduction and establishment of the everlasting kingdom which was to fill the earth.

5. It was during the reign of Rome that “the faith which was once delivered to the saints,” Christianity, was received in all its pureness by the followers of Jesus Christ. But it was also during the reign of Rome, and later the Holy Roman Empire, that profane and non-biblical practices, rituals and doctrines, were introduced to and accepted by the church. The once pure faith, delivered to the saints, was tainted by, among others, pagan philosophies, pagan doctrines and pagan feasts, often sugar-coated with a taste of Christian truth by half-baked Christians who occupied high positions and controlling the church with an iron rod. It is therefore of paramount importance and necessity that the kingdoms and systems of this world, be replaced by the “kingdom that will never be destroyed,” the kingdom where Jesus Christ rules in righteousness, and the true saints in Christ Jesus will live forevermore.

THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM

It is possible to divide Nebuchadnezzar's dream into two parts. The first part is the image he saw which was made up of different materials, gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay, and the second part was a rock or stone falling from heaven, striking the image on its feet and destroying it completely.

...until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Da. 2:34-35 NASB)

We have seen that the image represents four kingdoms or empires which ruling consecutively and that these kingdoms were the Babylonian kingdom represented by gold, the Medo-Persian kingdom represented by silver, the Macedonian Empire represented by bronze and the Roman Empire, together with its extension, the Holy Roman Empire, represented by iron and a mixture of iron and clay. All these kingdoms ruled for a specific time, then, having lost their power, they vanished from the scene. Now, said Daniel, a new kingdom would be set up and this kingdom would never be destroyed. The establishment of this kingdom began with a rock or stone that was cut loose by an invisible hand.

YOU CONTINUED LOOKING

The vision continued for some time, remaining long enough for him to make a careful observation of the things God was showing him.

UNTIL A STONE WAS CUT OUT WITHOUT HANDS

In verse 45 Daniel said that the stone was cut out of the mountain, and the cutting out was not performed by human hands. It appears that the image was standing on a plain close to a mountain. It stood firm until,

by some unseen agency, a stone was cut out of the mountain to strike the image. The important thing here is that the “cutting out” of the stone was not done by any human act. Also, the stone or rock was cut out suggesting that it did not become loose by accident, rather that there was a deliberate effort made to cut out the rock from the mountain. The only explanation then would be that it was none other than the unseen, Most High, God of Israel, who cut out or loosened the stone.

IT STRUCK THE STATUE ON ITS FEET

The size of the stone or rock is not mentioned, but the whole statement implies that it could not have been very large. The fact that it struck the image on its feet, is an indication that in relation to the statue it was small.

WERE CRUSHED ALL AT THE SAME TIME AND BECAME LIKE CHAFF

Nebuchadnezzar must have been amazed to see that such a small stone had the power to overthrow the gigantic statue, pulverising it to powder and so that the wind could carry it away, not a single trace of these kingdoms remaining.

THE STONE BECAME A GREAT MOUNTAIN

This stone, which was small and insignificant in comparison to the massive statue, contained a devastating power, energy and force that were significant enough to crush and grind the material composition of the statue into small pieces, they becoming like chaff blown away by the wind. The idea here is that these kingdoms – their institutions, systems and influences - were in totality done away with or, their importance had dwindled to the point that they no more had authority over mankind. The small stone, on the other hand, increased in size until it became a mountain filling the whole earth.

Daniel's own explanation of the stone that destroyed the image is:

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. (Da.2:44-45 NIV)

Up to the point when the stone struck the image on its feet, the world was ruled by kings and their kingdoms. Ordinary people had no choice in their own destiny. Their lives were literally in the hands of the reigning king. He and he alone decided their fate and whoever did not adhere to his wishes was subjected to the wrath of the monarch. A life was not worth much, and real freedom was non-existent.

According to Daniel the God of heaven – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the one and only true God, revealed to us as the Father of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour – will set up a new kingdom and this kingdom will be different from anything the world has ever known. This kingdom will, unlike all other known kingdoms, not be a man-made institution. This new kingdom will also be a heavenly kingdom established by God Himself. All other kingdoms of the earth, whether great or small, had a beginning and an end. Some lasted for a short time while others endured for a long time but all eventually came to an end.

The kingdom God is going to establish, says Daniel, will be an everlasting kingdom that will never be destroyed. Some earthly kingdoms have had a greater impact on the affairs of the world than others, but nothing they achieved can ever be comparable to what this new kingdom will bring about for the inhabitants of the earth! In this new kingdom, people will truly be free, and this freedom they will enjoy will indeed be of a kind that no one has ever known before. In that kingdom of God, they will, for the very first time in the history of man, be free from sin and the bondage that comes along with it.

Daniel says that this kingdom will start small, looking initially insignificant, however, it will gradually grow in proportion until it has reached the size of a mountain, yet not an ordinary mountain but a mountain that will fill the whole earth. Although Daniel knew all too well that he had received this great revelation from God Most High, speaking to Nebuchadnezzar, he himself might then not have been fully aware of its real significance and what was indeed revealed to him. Fact

is, Daniel saw into the future things that were still in the offing and which, up until the time of his revelation, were God's secrets He, in a very special way, had shared with Daniel, his servant.

We, however, are in a privileged position full knowing that the one whom God appointed as King of the new kingdom is none other than His own Son who has saved us and who took upon His shoulders the sins of the world. He, Jesus, only begotten Son of the Most-High God, became the Saviour of the world, redeeming us when He died a horrific death for our transgressions on the cross of Calvary. Throughout the ages those who placed their trust in this new and everlasting King were issued with a new passport, signed by the King Himself! They truly became citizens of the everlasting kingdom.

PART IV

Daniel Chapter 7 FOUR GREAT BEASTS FROM THE SEA

THE BEASTS

1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it. 2 Daniel said, “I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. 3 “And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. 4 “The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it. 5 “And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus, they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’ 6 “After this, I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. 7 “After this, I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet, and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. 8 “While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold,

this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS REIGNS

9 “I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire. 10 “A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat, and the books were opened. 11 “Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. 12 “As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.

THE SON OF MAN PRESENTED

13 “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. 14 “And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

THE VISION INTERPRETED

15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. 16 “I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So, he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 17 ‘These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. 18 ‘But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’ 19 “Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth

beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet, 20 and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates. 21 "I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them 22 until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favour of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. 23 "Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. 24 'As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. 25 'He will speak out against the Most-High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law, and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. 26 'But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. 27 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.' 28 "At this point, the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself." (Da.7:1-28 NASB)

OVERVIEW

I

In order to explain and apply the symbols in Daniel's vision it is

necessary to assume (a) that they are remarkable and worthy of our attention, (b) that there is a good reason for using a particular symbol to represent a specific kingdom, (c) that all the details of a symbol is important, and (d) that we can expect to find them all in the object they represent.

Chapter seven of the Book of Daniel contains an account of a very remarkable dream or vision which Daniel had in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar (Da. 7:1-14), and of the interpretation of the vision (Da. 7:15-28). Immediately after Daniel had received the vision, he wrote it down. In the vision, Daniel was standing near the sea, and he saw that the four winds of heaven had stirred the sea into wild commotion. Suddenly four beasts, each different from the other, emerged one after the other from the agitated sea, each remaining for a time before it again disappeared.

The first beast resembled a lion, but it also had wings like an eagle, however, the wings were plucked out and the beast was made to stand upright like a human being; a human heart was given to it. After this nothing more is said about this beast or what became of it.

Then there appeared a second beast and this one resembled a bear. The bear was raising itself up on one side and in its mouth were three ribs. Someone commanded the beast to rise and devour much flesh. Again, nothing more is said about this beast or what became of it.

Another beast arose and this one, in general, looked like a leopard, but it also had four wings as well as four heads. Except that dominion was given to the beast, nothing more is said of it or what became of it.

A fourth beast, totally diverse from the previous three beasts, arose out of the sea, however, nothing is said about its form, only that it was a terrible, powerful and exceedingly strong beast. It had great

iron teeth with which it devoured everything crossing its path. It broke into pieces what was left of its prey crushing it under its feet. At first, this beast only had ten horns, but soon another smaller horn arose among them. This little horn grew larger and then plucked up, i.e., uprooted, three of the ten horns. It was then that Daniel observed that this horn had human eyes as well as a mouth and that it spoke great things against the Most-High.

Daniel kept looking at this beast until thrones were set up (established), watching the Ancient of days sitting down. Daniel noticed that, because of the words the little horn had spoken, the beast was slain and its body destroyed and burned with fire. At the very same time, the dominion of the other beasts was also taken away, however, their existence was prolonged for a little time.

Hereafter, one in the form of a man, appeared in the vision and to him it was given to rule over all the people of the earth. He received an everlasting kingdom, that is, a kingdom that would never be destroyed.

Still, in a visionary state, Daniel realised that he was greatly troubled by what he had seen. He, therefore, approached someone who stood nearby (that is in the vision that was lingering) asking him to explain the meaning of the vision. He was told that the four beasts represented four earthly kings or kingdoms and that each would reign for a time, however, the saints of the Most-High would ultimately own the kingdom of heaven, reigning forever.

The schematic theme of the vision, therefore, was to reveal the forthcoming succession of earthly kingdoms or dynasties and to portray each one's unique character. Daniel was shown that these dynasties would be given power over the peoples of the earth up until the everlasting kingdom of God would be established and the rule on earth would be transferred to the righteous children of God. There will then come a time when "all dominions" or "all rulers" will obey the one who will be given authority over all.

Although Daniel was, on the whole, satisfied with the explanation, he was still puzzled about the fourth beast which was so unlike all the others. The messenger of God then explained the following to him:

1. That this beast represented a fourth kingdom or dynasty that would arise upon the earth.
2. This kingdom would be diverse from all the kingdoms that preceded it.

3. It would subdue the whole world, crushing and trampling down its foes.
4. Out of this global kingdom ten kings or kingdoms, represented by the ten horns of the beast, would arise.
5. The eleventh horn, i.e., the little horn that sprang up among the ten would be another king or kingdom, emerging from the head of the beast, in other words, from the dynasty represented by the fourth beast. However, this new power would be different from the other ten kingdoms. At first, it would be small, but it will grow and gain strength, and to such an extent that it would overcome three of the ten kingdoms. This kingdom's arrogance and haughtiness will cause it to blaspheme the Most-High, and it will use its power to rule over the children of God.
6. At some point in time, a heavenly court will pass judgment over the beast, resulting in its destruction.
7. The destruction of the fourth beast will be followed by an event and then the whole dominion of the earth will pass into the hands of the people of God, i.e., there finally will be a universal kingdom in which people will be ruled by the principles of truth and righteousness.

Concluding the chapter (Da. 7:28), Daniel said that the vision had deeply troubled him and that he was not the same after having received it. He had then supernaturally been permitted to look far into the future and to "see" major events that would change the progress of human affairs in an astounding way. He was also given permission by God to "see" a future Kingdom that would be ruled by an everlasting King and in this Kingdom, all of God's people would enjoy everlasting life. It is no wonder then, that he was overwhelmed by deep emotion.

When we look at the dreams/visions of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, we cannot help but be amazed at what was still destined for future happenings, yet all covered in minute detail by what was revealed to him by God Most High. If we accept these prophecies as truth, we should be able to see the whole course of history covering the period from Nebuchadnezzar down to our present time, and even further into the future until God's last judgment of this earth and its inhabitants will take place. It indeed seems unlikely to imagine that a

young Judean could, from his own mind, devise such remarkable foresight, predicting the unfolding of world history so accurately. How could one person portray symbolically future history of the world applying such definite calculations of time if not endowed with supernatural ability? Surely, we must admit, that he was an inspired prophet of God, who spoke words full of significance and which even he himself could not fully grasp.

We should never, based on modern-day science, assume that, without proof of evidence, prophetic foresight (foretelling) is impossible, as some interpreters from the so-called critical school love to believe. From Deut. 18:22 we can tell that the Jews of old believed in "foretelling" prophecy (to make things known in advance). Let's be clear, foretelling prophecy is not fortune-telling; it is God, using the tongue (the prophetic word) or mind (visions) under the guidance of His Spirit to reveal unknown things or events either to or through an anointed vessel and which events will then in future take place affecting a nation or even a person's destiny.

Prophecy can also apply the past to the present as well as the future, proving God's omniscience. Biblical prophecy, therefore, entails supernatural intervention whereas man's natural wisdom and understanding speaks of man's innate qualities like insight, and pertaining to what is usually labelled as a knack or premonition (a hunch/sixth sense) to solve a problem in an unusual way or to grasp the solution beforehand, applying one's natural intelligence and insight to "predict" the outcome of current happenings.

The early Christians believed in prophecy that foretold. Their whole argument against the Jews was the recital of what the prophets had spoken. Denying that prophecy foretells is then to say that Christianity is founded on a massive error, and to deny that this grand "heirloom" of early Christianity still applies today, is to admit that Christianity has lost its God-given power!

We should also not assume that the prophets necessarily always must have understood the meaning of their own prophetic word. The apostle Peter said that they were,

seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. (1 Pet. 1:11 NASB)

Therefore, the critical assumption that the words of a prophet were absolutely conditioned by his/her environment, is simply ridiculous. Those who resort to this type of explanation of the prophetic word, indeed have no right to say that no more can be contained in a prophecy than what the prophet, who uttered it, could have fully understood!

Throughout the ages, past and present, many scholars have attempted to explain the symbols of Daniel's vision. The result is that we have at our disposal numerous books and articles, each attempting to explain the "true" meaning of this intricate vision. They represent a variety of different methods of interpretation, which, of course, are by no means agreed on by expositors. The only hope of compiling a meaningful explanation of the symbols of Daniel's vision is, therefore, by doing a careful examination of the text.

I maintain that this dream is generally of the same meaning as that of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the metallic image. Daniel's vision, however, contains different symbols and much more detail. He received his vision about forty-eight years after he had explained Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

My comments on this unique vision are by no means "new" or, for that matter, unique. My only aim in presenting this commentary is that my attempt to explain this unique vision will persuade those reading it to dig deeper into the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament, doing so, with better understanding.

Jesus said that the discovery of the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a treasure hidden in a field, and when a man finds it, he is so overcome with joy that, to become the owner of this new-found treasure, he sells all his other possessions and buys the field (Mat. 13:44). These wise words of our Saviour can likewise be applied to the treasures deeply hidden in Old Testament prophecies.

COMMENTS

I

n the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream

and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and said,

...I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea, and four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. (Da. 7:2 NASB)

Until the middle of the 1800s, Belshazzar (*Bel-shar-usur*) had been known only from the Book of Daniel and from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. This so-called lack of historical proof was used by the critical school as one of the arguments to disprove the authenticity of the Book of Daniel. However, in 1854 Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions were discovered in which Belshazzar is mentioned several times.

According to these newfound Babylonian inscriptions, Belshazzar was the eldest son of Nabonidus and his wife Nitocris, who was a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar was, therefore, a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. In Da. 5:11 the queen advises Belshazzar to call on Daniel to interpret the writing on the wall referring to Nebuchadnezzar as "your father," but the word "father" is here, as in many other places in Scripture, used in the sense of "ancestor."

Nabonidus was king of Babylon from 555 to 539 B.C. In 550 B.C. he entrusted Belshazzar with the throne and the major part of his army when, for some unknown reason, he decided, of his own will, to retire into exile. During his co-regency, Belshazzar administered the government, his own estates, and those of his father, though, according to the Book of Daniel, famine and economic setbacks occurred late in his rule.

The Book of Daniel does not tell us much about Belshazzar. However, Belshazzar's history is not critical for the explanation of

Daniel's vision except that he was the last of the kings of Babylon, and this fact may cast some light on the disclosures made in the vision.

We are told that Daniel saw a series of events in a vision while he was asleep. This was by no means an ordinary dream or a fantasy occupying his mind. It was a vision of future events that would have an impact on world affairs, and it was given to him by the Spirit of God.

The vision made such an impact on Daniel that he felt compelled to immediately write it down. It was customary among the prophets to either write down or communicate to others what they have received from God. This will ensure that, when the prophesied event occurs, there will be no doubt that it was inspired prophecy. Many times, the prophets of God were commanded to record what they heard from God or what God showed to them in visions.

FOUR WINDS OF HEAVEN STIRRING THE SEA

The four winds, also known as "the four winds from the four quarters of heaven" (Je. 49:36), would then refer to the east, the west, the north and the south winds. These winds, coming from all directions, stirred up the great sea – the ocean. However, they are "the winds of heaven" which then, represents the heavenly powers and forces by which God sets the nations of the world in motion, stirring them into confusion.

The number four is also an indication that all the nations of all the regions of the earth would be stirred up into a violent commotion. It was from out of this agitated sea - nations - that the beasts arose. It would, therefore, be fair to say that political, social and cultural commotions among nations would cause successive kingdoms to rise and rule one after the other. We can also say that each one would naturally have the characteristics specified by the appearance of the specific beast representing it.

In our search for the fulfilment of the events as were seen by Daniel, we should search back into history for some state of affairs that had thrown the nations into agitation and convulsion, particularly, historical happenings that preceded the rise of these four successive kingdoms. It would be logical then to assume that the process by which each of the successive kingdoms would rise, would immediately be

preceded by things that would, in effect, cause the fall of the kingdom that preceded it.

FOUR DIFFERENT BEASTS

From verses 4 to 8 we see that the four great beasts of Daniel's vision had not all appeared at the same time. The logical observation, therefore, is that they followed one after the other. Also, they each had a different appearance, i.e., they looked different from each other. As a matter of fact, they all had characteristics that would set them apart the one from the other.

The appearance of these four beasts was indeed monstrous. Daniel saw a lion with eagle's wings, a bear with three ribs in its mouth, a leopard with four wings, and four heads and an unidentifiable beast with ten horns. It may seem strange to us that such extraordinary symbols were used to represent kings or kingdoms, but it was not unusual among ancient Eastern nations, as may be seen in monuments of antiquity.

For instance, horns are attached to beasts which naturally have none and these symbols or emblems were used in hieroglyphic writings to express strength and power. They were also supposed to be the symbols of different nations and are still used in heraldry today. It might even be that the science of heraldry arose from the knowledge gained from the symbols used in the Scriptures.

THE FIRST BEAST

T

he first beast was,

like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it. (Da. 7:4 NASB)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BEAST

Regarding the first beast, we should look at the following:

1. It was like a lion, i.e., it had the natural characteristics of a lion.
2. It had eagle's wings.
3. The wings were plucked out.
4. The beast was lifted so as to stand on two feet like a human being.
5. A human heart was given to the beast.

THE FIRST WAS LIKE A LION

As, “king of the beasts” the lion, in general, is the symbol of strength and courage. It is often used in the Scriptures to express this attribute.

Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up?
(Gen. 49:9 NASB)

This is a clear indication that the tribe of Judah would have supremacy over the other tribes of Israel.

What was your mother? A lioness among lions! She lay down among young lions, she reared her cubs. 'When she brought up one of her cubs, He became a lion, and he learned to tear his prey; He devoured men.
(Eze. 19:2-3 NASB)

Here we have another suggestion that Judah was among the nations like a lioness is among the beasts of the field; she had strength and sovereignty. In 2 Sam. 23:20 it is said that Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, slew two, "lion-like" men of Moab.

The Hebrew word *ariel* literally means, "lion of God" and in this sentence, it is meant to be "an eminent hero". In Greek mythology, Homer^{28a} describes Hercules and Achilles as lion-hearted.

Compare also the following Scriptures: Psa. 7:2; 22:21; 57:4; 58:6; Job. 4:10; Je. 4:7; Je. 49:19; Joel 1:6.

The only proper interpretation then is that the lion represented a kingdom that would be known for its power and dominion. In relation to other kingdoms, it would be as the lion is among the beasts of the field. It would be feared as long as it would uphold dominion over them.

WINGS OF AN EAGLE

This is one of the peculiarities of the symbol. It is altogether an unnatural union of things, a representation of things or qualities that would normally not be found in one particular animal. From what was said above, the lion would naturally represent or express one set of qualities found in the kingdom it represented, such as power, dominion and sovereignty. The eagle's wings would therefore express some characteristic of the kingdom and which nothing in the lion would properly represent. It would then be some ability which would naturally be found in an eagle, but not in a lion.

The lion is known for its power, ferocity and fearlessness, however, it is not known for its speed. Furthermore, a lion does not normally cover a very large area in its hunt for prey. The eagle, on the other hand,

is known for its swiftness and the vast area in which it hunts for food. Also, in the Scriptures, the eagle is often a token of swiftness "...his horses are swifter than eagles" (Je. 4:13). See also Je. 48:40; Je. 49:22; Lam. 4:19 and Hab. 1:8. Therefore, the eagle's wings, attached to the first beast, would add the ability to move rapidly, also to cover an enormous area in its hunt for prey.

The proper meaning of this symbol, therefore, would be that it represents a kingdom that would not only be known to be ferocious, powerful and fearsome but also one which would move its arms with speed extending its conquests to far off places.

ITS WINGS WERE PLUCKED

This refers to some process by which the wings were pulled out, that is severed from the lion. The proper meaning would be that something would happen that would stop the progress of the conqueror. Daniel looked on until the wings were plucked out, implying that it was not done at once. The winged lion had had time to expand its reign to far off places before loosing its ability to move quickly. We see the lion again, but this time without its wings, i.e., a kingdom that had ceased to spread its triumphs over the earth.

IT WAS LIFTED UP FROM THE GROUND AND MADE TO STAND ON TWO FEET LIKE A MAN

The lion, stripped of its wings, was made to stand upright on its hind legs. This is indeed an unusual position for a lion. However, the meaning of the symbol is not difficult. It was still a lion, but a radical change had taken place making the lion act like a human. It implies that the ferocity, the fearlessness and the power of the lion had been replaced by the comparative weakness of a man.

It stands to reason, then, that this kingdom would, at some point in time, experience a transformation in its general character. Its former power and strength would be exchanged for weakness and tranquillity.

A HUMAN MIND ALSO WAS GIVEN TO IT

In the Scriptures, the heart often has a much closer relation to our intellect or faculty of understanding than it now in our current perception of things has. In this phrase it is probably referring to human nature, that is that the nature of the lion would be transformed into that of a human being. It may imply that this kingdom, who would carry its arms with the speed of an eagle and the fierceness of a lion to the outskirts of the earth, would be stopped and it would be given a character of comparative calmness and humanity.

APPLICATION OF THE SYMBOL

A

bout the application of this symbol, there is, amazingly,

almost no difference of opinion between expositors. The majority agrees that it refers to the kingdom of Babylon of which Nebuchadnezzar was the head – very much the same as the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In comparison with Nebuchadnezzar, his successors were either weak, corrupt or both. Their weakness and corruption led to a gradual diminishing of the brutality of their conquests. The lion's wings were plucked, and the kingdom fell into a downward spiral until it was conquered by the king of the Medes and the Persians.



Source: Neo_babylonia_empire_540_bc.svg (Map released into the public domain)

THE FIRST WAS LIKE A LION

The king of the beasts – would accurately represent the kingdom of Babylon under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. His kingdom, which was signified by the golden head of the great image, was the first and noblest of all the kingdoms as well as the greatest in its time. In the prophets, the following is being said of Nebuchadnezzar and his armies:

1. He is compared to a lion:

A lion has gone up from his thicket, and a destroyer of nations has set out; he has gone out from his place to make your land a waste. Your cities will be ruins without inhabitant. (Je. 4:7 NASB)

2. The armies of the Babylonians are compared to lions:

Its roaring is like a lioness, and it roars like young lions; It growls as it seizes the prey and carries it off with no one to deliver it. (Isa. 5:29 NASB)

3. Nebuchadnezzar and his armies would fly like an eagle:

For thus says the LORD: 'Behold, one will fly swiftly like an eagle and spread out his wings against Moab. (Je. 48:40 NASB)

The general nature and character of the lion fits well as a symbol representing the power and brutality of his kingdom.

IT HAD THE WINGS OF AN EAGLE

Ezekiel compares Nebuchadnezzar to a great eagle:

Thus says the Lord GOD, 'A great eagle with great wings, long pinions and a full plumage of many colours came to Lebanon and took away the top of the cedar. (Eze. 17:3 NASB)

The wings of the eagle signify the speed with which the lion, that is Nebuchadnezzar, made his conquests. Within only a few years, and by his own arms, he conquered Syria, Phoenicia, Judea, Egypt, Arabia and many others. He built and raised his empire to such a size, and greatness, that it could truly be classified as a universal empire. Babylon became the envy of the ancient world.

ITS WINGS WERE PLUCKED

The plucking of the wings represents the termination of conquest, that is, it would expand no further. History tells us that when Nebuchadnezzar died, the Babylonian Empire ceased to be a kingdom known for conquest. Although it still held a prominent place among the nations, it stopped conquering new territories.

In comparison with Nebuchadnezzar, his successors were weak and lax. Lydia, Media and Persia, to name a few, all provinces of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, rebelled and gained independence under kings of their own. In fact, the rapidity of its conquests stopped with its wars with the Medes and Persians. The wings of the lion, truly, had been plucked.

IT WAS LIFTED UP FROM THE GROUND

The rising of the lion on its feet would be a sign of the change of the kingdom under the successors of Nebuchadnezzar – their weakness and non-care attitude.

A HUMAN HEART WAS GIVEN TO IT

The giving of a man's heart to it would be applicable to the change manifesting the empire after the time of Nebuchadnezzar and under a succession of comparatively weak and lax kings. In comparison to Nebuchadnezzar who was lion-hearted (expressing the wildness and fierceness of an untamed beast), his successors were human-hearted (expressing their weakness and feebleness). The gradual change in character of the empire is what is indicated by this symbol – a man's heart.

THE SECOND BEAST

Following
in the
footsteps
of the first

beast a
second one
came up
from the
sea.

And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus, they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’ (Da. 7:5 NASB)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BEAST

Regarding the second beast, we should consider the following:

1. The beast resembled a bear – that is, it looked like a bear and it had the character of a bear.
2. It was raised up on one side.
3. Three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth.
4. It was commanded to arise and devour much meat.

A SECOND ONE, RESEMBLING A BEAR

That is after the lion had disappeared. The bear was a well-known animal found in Media, a mountainous, cold and rough country, covered with woods. Its character is much different from the lion or any other animal. There must have been a very good reason why the bear was chosen to represent the second kingdom – the one that would succeed the lion-kingdom.

Bochart⁶⁷ says the bear is distinguished mainly for two things, that is its cunningness and its ferocity. Aristotle⁵⁹ believed that the bear was a greedy, silly and foolhardy animal. In Hosea God said to Israel:

I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs, and I will tear open their chests... (Hosea 13:8 NASB)

Writers on the natures of beasts say that none is more savage than a she-bear when bereaved of her whelps.^{77a} Another example of the bear's character is found in 2 Samuel:

...You know that your father and his men are mighty men and that they are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field... (2Sa.17:8 NASB)

According to the great King Solomon, there is only one thing worse than a bear,

Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs rather than a fool in his folly. (Pro. 17:12 NASB)

The characteristics of the second kingdom, therefore, would be things such as ferocity, roughness, fierceness in war, especially when provoked.

One would expect that this kingdom's actions would be less noble than that of the first. It would be, in other words, more severe in its treatment of those resisting it. This kingdom would therefore apply brutality and savage cunning in its dealings with other nations.

IT WAS RAISED UP ON ONE SIDE

The King James Version reads, “and it raised up itself on one side”, implying that it was not yet fully raised, but rather that it was in the process of raising itself up on one side.

The object to the Hebrew verb ho-kit-mah (it raised up) is easily supplied by the context: it raised up, that is, its body, on one side. This means neither that it leaned on one side (Ebrard), nor that it stood on its fore feet (Hävernick), for the sides of a bear are not its fore and hinder part; but we are to conceive that the beast, resting on its feet, raised up the feet of the one side for the purpose of going forward, and so raised the shoulder or the whole body on that side.⁷⁸

Rising, the bear, therefore, lifted up one side before the other. This position then simulates a kingdom that would deliberately rise itself up for a definite purpose, such as for conquest or for war – much like a sleeping bear would rise when hungry, or when going out for his prey.

THREE RIBS WERE IN ITS MOUTH

The image here seems to indicate that the bear had killed another animal tearing out three ribs from its side holding it in its mouth. Whether the number of ribs has any deeper meaning is not clear. Some scholars do not see any significant meaning in the number three while others believe that it implies the number of nations or kingdoms which the bear-kingdom had overthrown, which declaration seems convincing.

However, the natural idea suggested by this part of the symbol would be that this new kingdom would be vicious and brutal and that it had already conquered some kings or kingdoms. With the trophies of

its former conquests, it would now stand up, ready to go forth to gain new victories, or to conquer others.

ARISE, DEVOUR MUCH MEAT

Someone who had authority over the beasts commanded the bear to go forth and devour much flesh. As a symbol, this would be a kingdom receiving a command from God to go ahead and conquer more kingdoms than it had already defeated. It would arise from its sleep and go and achieve new victories.

The fact that God is actively involved in the history of man is well illustrated in the following:

Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed, whom I have taken by the right hand, to subdue nations before him and to loose the loins of kings; to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: "I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars. "I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name. (Isa. 45:1-3 NASB)

APPLICATION OF THE SYMBOL

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ith regard to the application of this symbol, almost all

biblical analysts agree that the bear represents the combined kingdom of the Medes and the Persians, commonly known as the Medo-Persian Empire. As to some of the details of the symbol, there are, as can be expected, a few differences of opinion.

Cyrus the Great defeated Babylon and brought the Babylonian Empire under his rule. The Medo-Persian Empire is still considered by many as the most powerful of the ancient empires. At the height of its power, during the reign of Darius I the Great, the empire had control over more than 2.9 million square miles (7.5 million square kilometres) of land which spanned three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe). Its control extended eastward into India and westward to Greece. Its capitals were Persepolis and Susa, although its kings sometimes resided in Babylon. Also, it is estimated that in 480 B.C. the empire had 50 million people living under its control. This was roughly 44 per cent of the world's population at the time, making it the largest empire ever in terms of population percentage. The bear, indeed, devoured much meat.



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A SECOND ONE, RESEMBLING A BEAR

The bear would accurately represent the Medo-Persian kingdom under the reign of Cyrus the Great and his successors. As already seen, the bear represented any brutal, ferocious and overbearing kingdom and as such, it might be applicable to any such kingdom. However, it would have to be a kingdom following in the footsteps of the Babylonian dynasty. The kingdom that best befits what the bear represents would be the Medo-Persian dynasty. Going back to the great statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2), we see that the breast and arms

were of silver and we know that it was a symbol that represented the second kingdom. The arms on the side of the breast signified that the second kingdom would consist of two parts.

In Daniel 8 the second kingdom is represented by a ram having two horns:

Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last.
(Da. 8:3 NASB)

In Da. 8:20 it says explicitly that the two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.

The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia.(NASB)

So also, in our verse (Da. 7:5), the dual sidedness of the second kingdom is represented by the bear lifting itself up on one side. The Medo-Persian bear here would therefore have two sides, the one Median and the other Persian.

At the time when efforts would be made to erect the new world kingdom, the Median side would be at rest, while at the same time, the Persian side would lift itself up, not only becoming higher as in the vision of the ram, but it would also prepare itself for new conquests.

Johann D. Michaelis⁶⁷ says the symbol implies that, as one part of the bear was more raised than the other, it would indicate that the Medo-Persian Empire was indeed composed of two kingdoms, however, the one was more exalted or advanced than the other.

The Medes, an ancient people, and the Persians, a modern tribe, formed one united sovereignty in contrast to the third and fourth kingdoms, each originally one, afterwards divided.⁷⁷

THE RIBS IN THE MOUTH OF THE BEAST

This would, in all probability, refer to some previous conquest, that is before the bear even began raising itself up on one side, it, by then, had already seized the spoils of one or more of its former conquests in its mouth. It would, therefore, be applicable to the Medes and/or Persian's

successes in former wars, that is, before its attack on Babylon and its establishment as the combined Medo-Persian kingdom. As to the number and the proper meaning of the ribs, a variety of opinions and explanations are given of which the following is a summary of the most popular explanations:

1. The number three may not be of significance, but it is possible that there has been a reference to the kingdoms of Persia, Media, and Lydia, that was actually under the rule of Cyrus when making his move on Babylon.⁶⁷
2. If the Medo-Persian world-kingdom is symbolised by the bear, then the three ribs in its mouth would be the kingdoms of Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt, all conquered by the Medo-Persians.⁷⁸
3. The three ribs are Media, Lydia and Babylon, brought under the sway of Persia.⁷⁷
4. The three kingdoms were Sardes, Babylon and Egypt, which were defeated and oppressed by the Medes and Persians.^{42a}

Of the above possibilities Media, Lydia and Babylon seem to be the most applicable choice. We know that Cyrus, while he was only a Persian prince and before he became king of the Medo-Persian kingdom, conquered these kingdoms.

DEVOUR MUCH MEAT

As mentioned before the Medo-Persian Empire, at the height of its power and during the reign of Darius I the Great, controlled more than 2.9 million square miles (7.5 million square kilometres) of land which spanned three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe.) Its control extended eastward into India and westward to Greece. Its capitals were Persepolis and Susa. Also, it is estimated that in 480 B.C. the empire had 50 million people living under its control. This was roughly 44 per cent of the world's population at the time, making it the largest empire ever in terms of population percentage. The bear, indeed, devoured much meat.

THE THIRD BEAST

Daniel kept looking,

and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. (Da. 7:6 NASB)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BEAST

Regarding the third beast, we should consider the following:

1. The beast was like a leopard – i.e., it looked like a leopard and it had the character of a leopard.
2. It had four bird's wings on its back.
3. It had four heads.
4. Dominion was given to the beast.

ONE, LIKE A LEOPARD

That is after the bear had disappeared. This is an indication that this would be another kingdom or power that would succeed the kingdom represented by the bear. In ancient times, a leopard was believed to be a hybrid of a lion and a panther. Its name, leopard, is a combination of two Greek words, λέων leōn (lion) and πάρδος pardos (male panther). The leopard's success in the wild is mainly due to its well-camouflaged fur, which is marked with rosettes and its ability to run at speeds of up to 58 kilometres per hour. It feeds on a broad ranged diet and can easily adapt to various habitats. The leopard is also exceptionally strong as shown by its ability to move heavy carcasses up into trees. The animal is mentioned in the Scriptures for its following characteristics:

1. Dignity – It is compared to the lion and the wolf.

Therefore, a lion from the forest will slay them, A wolf of the deserts will destroy them, A leopard is watching their cities. (Je. 5:6 NASB)

2. Fierceness - Isaiah classifies the leopard with the other wild animals who will all be transformed and to be like mild animals in the coming kingdom and the reign of the Messiah.

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. (Is. 11:6 NASB)

3. Swiftness or speed.

Their horses are swifter than leopards... (Hab. 1:8 NASB)

4. Its ability to lie in wait for its prey.

So I will be like a lion to them; Like a leopard, I will lie in wait by the wayside. (Hos. 13:7 NASB)

The beast, described by Daniel as one that had the appearance of a leopard, would then be a beast that would be smaller and not as strong as the lion or the bear. However, it would be superior to them in its ability to move much faster than they, and to, in its quickness, overpower its prey.

When used as a symbol, the leopard would represent a kingdom that would be nobler than the one represented by the bear, but it would not have the same quality of kingship over others than that of the lion-kingdom. It would then be a kingdom preying upon others, also very quick in its movements, catching its enemies by surprise. The spots on its fur may be symbolic of a kingdom comprised of different nations.

FOUR WINGS OF A BIRD

The first beast was seen with the wings of an eagle but without any specified number. We can only assume that it was a pair of wings, i.e., two wings. This beast, the third, appears with wings but without specifying any particular type of wings, though the number is mentioned, that is, four. Most translations render them as bird's wings while some use the phrase, "wings of a fowl". Although the leopard is known for its speed, the four wings, undoubtedly, would indicate its more than ordinary ability to move quickly.

None of the other beasts would be able to move as fast as the four-winged leopard. The difference between the wings of the first and third beasts would probably indicate an extended flight in the case of the first while the four wings of the third beast might point to a much faster flight. The nation represented by the leopard would, therefore, in its conquests of other nations, move much faster than its predecessors had. Also, the third kingdom would expand itself in flight to all regions of the earth, for it has four wings, yet, its flight would not be as royal as the first beast – for the leopard's wings are not eagle's wings, but only that of a fowl.

THE BEAST ALSO HAD FOUR HEADS

This is an indication that the kingdom represented by this beast either be:

1. One power kingdom composed of four separate powers or nations united in one, or,
2. there would be four successive kings or dynasties in the history of this kingdom, or,

3. the kingdom would be divided into four separate kingdoms, all having the same origin and as such be recognised as extensions of the same dynasty.

The second option, though, does not fit with the image of the beast because the four heads did not rise up one after another. They all existed contemporaneously on the body of the beast. The symbol can only represent four contemporary kings, or else that this kingdom would be divided into four kingdoms.

Keil and Delitzsch⁷⁸ argues that because the four wings are mentioned before the four heads, the application of the symbol is that the kingdom would spread itself over the earth with the speed of a bird's flight, and then it would become a fourfold-kingdom, or it would divide itself into four kingdoms, as is distinctly shown in Da. 8:5-8.

DOMINION WAS GIVEN TO THE BEAST

That is, it would be appointed to rule where others had ruled, yet it would not be because of its own attributes such as skill, courage or valour, but rather that dominion would be given to it according to the will of God and the ordering of His providence.

APPLICATION OF THE SYMBOL

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bout the application of this symbol, there should not be any

difficulty as to what it represents. The majority of interpreters, it seems, agree that the leopard, with its four wings and four heads, as a symbol, represents the Macedonian Empire. This empire was founded by Alexander the Great and, upon his death, after a period of much turmoil, it was continued in the four Macedonian kingdoms that finally emerged from it. There are, however, some that had entertained - and some still do so - some variety in their views concerning the third beast. There are those who contend that the bear refers to Media and the leopard, to the combined Medo-Persian Empire. However, the objections to this exposition are, to say the least, obvious and so numerous, that the idea cannot be sustained because:

1. The kingdom of Media did not, in any proper sense, succeed that of Babylon;
2. The three ribs in the mouth of the bear have no application to Media and;
3. The whole description and application, as seen above, of the second beast, falls entirely in line with the history of the combined Medo-Persian Empire.

The third beast would best represent the kingdom or dynasty that followed directly on that of the Medo-Persian Empire and that kingdom or dynasty would be Alexander's Macedonian kingdom. This new kingdom ruled over the same countries that had before been occupied by both the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires and continuing in this manner until it was swallowed up in the conquests of Rome.

ONE, LIKE A LEOPARD

This beast had the likeness and character of a leopard. It is a perfect fit for the kingdom founded by Alexander the Great. The leopard's comparative nobleness, as beast of prey, the quickness of its movements, the way it moves and jumps suddenly upon its prey - all agreeing well with Alexander's kingdom. Barnes says that:

There was no other kingdom among the ancients to which it (the leopard) could be better applied.⁶⁷

All the characteristics of the animal agree with the characteristics of Alexander, his movements among the nations, and with the kingdom that was founded by him.

FOUR WINGS OF A BIRD

This, very appropriately, represented the swiftness of the conquests of Alexander. No other ancient leader can be compared to him in this respect. Daniel brought to our attention the fact that the leopard had four bird's wings, as contrasted with the lion who had two eagle's wings. This could only mean that the one with the eagle's wings had a broader flight, whereas the leopard, with its four wings, had a more rapid flight. Again, the first agrees well with the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar and the second with those of Alexander. Jerome said:

Nothing was more swift than the conquest of Alexander, from Illyricum and the Adriatic Sea, unto the Indian ocean, and the river Ganges; he rather ran through the world by victories than by battles, and in six years subdued part of Europe, all Asia even unto India.⁵³

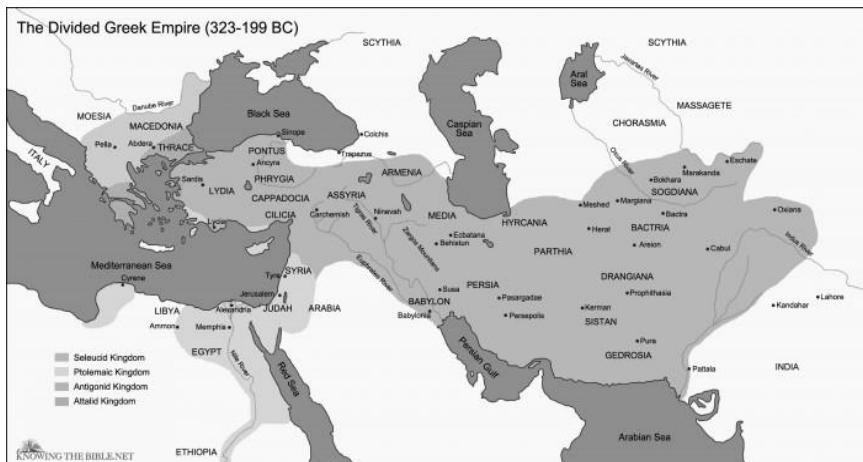
THE BEAST HAD FOUR HEADS

The four heads united to the one body of the leopard is applicable to the well-known fact that, when Alexander died, his empire eventually fell into the hands of four of his generals who in turn became the leaders of four distinct sub-kingdoms, all arising from the same source, that is the Macedonian Empire. At the death of Alexander, his brother, Philip Aridaeus and Alexander's infant son by his wife Roxana, were appointed by the chief generals of the army to succeed Alexander. At

the same time, Perdiccas was appointed to govern the kingdom until Alexander's son came of age.

The empire was divided into thirty-three sub-governments, distributed among as many general officers. Very soon, however, the kingdom fell into disarray and a period of confusion, anarchy, crime, rebellion and civil war followed that was almost without a parallel in ancient times.

The confusion ended after the battle of Ipsus, 303 B.C. During this battle, Antigonus was defeated and Alexander's empire was divided into four kingdoms and given to four of his chief generals. The four kingdoms were, (a) Thrace and Bithynia under the rule of Lysimachus, (b) Syria and the East under the rule of Seleucus, (c) Egypt under the rule of Ptolemy Soter and, (d) Macedonia under Cassander. It was, therefore, these four powers, represented by the four heads that sprung forth from the one empire founded by Alexander. These four powers, all considered as Greek or Macedonian, then continued to rule until they were swallowed up by the Romans.



<https://www.knowingthebible.net/studies/bible-maps>

DOMINION WAS GIVEN TO THE BEAST

It was not owing to the skill, courage, or valour of Alexander and his troops, that he made his conquests. The nations were given to him, for, as Newton says:

Had he not been assisted by the mighty power of God, how could he, with only thirty thousand men, have overcome Darius with six hundred thousand; and in so short a time have brought the countries from Greece as far as India into subjection?^{43c}

THE FOURTH BEAST

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he fourth beast was,

...dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet, and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. (Da. 7:7 NASB)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BEAST

Regarding the fourth beast, we should consider the following:

1. It was dreadful, terrifying and very strong.
2. It had large iron teeth.
3. It devoured, crushed and trampled down everything under its feet.
4. It was different from all the other beasts.
5. It had ten horns.

A DREADFUL, TERRIFYING AND EXTREMELY STRONG

BEAST

Daniel did not say what the form of the beast was, nor what its nature would be. We can only use our own imagination as to what form it must have had, but in all probability, it was some kind of monster that had no resemblance to any known animal. What we do know, however, is that this beast was dreadful, terrible and exceedingly strong. In summary, we can say that this beast inspired such terror as was not known or experienced during the reign of the first three beasts.

The general meaning of this, as explained to Daniel, indicates that this kingdom,

...shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. (Da. 7:23 ESV)

As a symbol, it would represent a power or kingdom that would be much more fearful, much more feared, much larger, more strict and brutal than that of the three preceding kingdoms that preceded it. It would be oppressive, and its use of violence to destroy its enemies would be extreme. It would also advance by power and terror as opposed to the others that were more cunning and artful in their conquests.

LARGE IRON TEETH

It had large teeth, but not just ordinary teeth or tusks such as other animals have, but teeth made of iron. This was another characteristic of this beast which showed that there would be something very peculiar in the character of the kingdom it represents. This would be a nation that would be exceedingly brutal; a ferocious savage nation, much more feared than those who preceded it. Teeth are often used in the Scriptures as symbols of cruelty or as a devouring enemy.

There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men. (Pro.30:14 NASB)

DEVOURED, CRUSHED AND TRAMPLED THE REMAINDER

DOWN

Like a fierce monster it devoured everything with its teeth and whatever it could not devour, it crushed and trampled down with its feet. Its purpose would be to destroy for the sake of destroying its rivals. It would be determined to crush all in its way and this symbol would be applicable to a nation that would subdue and crush other nations for the mere sake of having its own way or, alternatively, it would totally be unwilling to allow others their independence.

DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE OTHER BEASTS

Daniel did not say in what respects it was different from the other beasts since he did not specify its appearance. It was then not a lion, a bear or a leopard and its appearance was such that it could not compare to any known animal or creature.

However, Daniel did point out features that were graphically different to this beast, namely that it had ten horns, also a unique little horn in between and that it was fitted with iron teeth. All we can then infer from this strange portrayal is that the kingdom represented by this beast would be significantly different from those who had preceded it. We should then look for something that would be more unusual than the basic common differences among the nations.

IT HAD TEN HORNS

The ten horns are one of the main differences between this beast and all the others that went before. We know by now, that the horn is a symbol of power and that it is frequently applied as an emblem in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelations (See Da. 7:7-8, Da. 7:20, Da. 7:24, Da. 8:3-9, Da. 8:20-2, Rev. 5:6; Rev. 13:1, Rev. 13:11, Rev. 17:3, Rev. 17:12 and Rev. 17:16).

The false prophet, Zedekiah, used horns as a symbol of strength:

Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron, and said, thus saith Jehovah, with these shalt thou push the Syrians until they be consumed. (1 Ki. 22:11 KJV)

In Zec.1:18-19, the four horns seen by the prophet are said to be the four great powers that scattered and wasted the Jewish nation. There can also be no doubt as to the meaning of the symbol here because one of the heavenly messengers explained it to Daniel, saying,

*...for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise...(Da.7:24
NASB)*

From the aforesaid explanation we see that the ten horns represent ten kings or kingdoms that would arise out of the primary kingdom, the fourth beast, at some period in its history.

It is therefore not that the fourth kingdom would arise out of the ten others, amalgamated or consolidated into one kingdom, but rather that out of the one kingdom ten would arise, exercising their rulership, alternatively, in which the power of the one kingdom would be ultimately dispersed. We should, therefore, search for a powerful kingdom crushing nations by its exceedingly great military might and in its future division into ten or more smaller kingdoms or dynasties.

APPLICATION OF THE SYMBOL

A

t the end of the vision, Daniel desired to know the exact

meaning of the fourth beast. It was as though the first three beasts, their appearance and their peculiar characteristics, presented him with no significant problems. The fourth beast, however, was so totally different from the rest and its conduct of such nature that his “thoughts were greatly alarming him, and his face grew pale.” In verses twenty-three to twenty-seven someone, a heavenly messenger, gave Daniel the following brief explanation concerning the fourth beast and the coming of an everlasting kingdom that would replace all the earthly kingdoms:

1. The fourth beast will be an earthly kingdom that would be different from all the other kingdoms.
2. This kingdom will devour the whole earth treading it down and crushing it.
3. The ten horns will be ten kings/kingdoms arising from the fourth beast’s kingdom.
4. The little horn will be another king/kingdom arising after its predecessors had already been established.
5. The little horn will be different from the ten, subduing three kings.
6. The little horn will speak out against the Most-High, wearing out the saints of the Highest One.
7. The little horn will intend making alterations in times and in the law.
8. The saints of the Most-High will be given into his hand for a time, times and half-a-time.

DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER KINGDOMS

The identification of the kingdom or empire symbolised by the fourth beast has always been a contentious matter. Most ancient analysts – such as Josephus and the author of the Apocalypse of Baruch among others – were of the opinion that it is the Roman Empire. However, a very large number of modern critics – and not just those from the very exclusive critical school – are of the opinion that it refers to either the Greek Empire as a whole or the Seleucid portion thereof.

As we have seen in the comments on the third beast, the empire founded by Alexander the Great, upon his death, eventually fell into the hands of four of his generals and who became leaders of four distinct kingdoms, all arising from the same source, that is the Macedonian Empire. (See my comments on the third beast).

The four kingdoms were, (a) Thrace and Bithynia under the rule of Lysimachus, (b) Syria and the East under the rule of Seleucus, (c) Egypt under the rule of Ptolemy Soter and (d) Macedonia under Cassander. These four powers, all considered as Greek or Macedonian, continued to rule until they were swallowed up by the Romans.

On account of the statement that the fourth empire would be diverse from all that had gone before, the view separating the Seleucid Empire from that of Alexander, can be discarded. The empire of the Seleucids was in no sense whatsoever diverse from that of Alexander. It is also stated that the fourth empire would be stronger than all those that had preceded it, therefore, in no ways whatsoever can it be said of the Seleucid Empire and which was at most, a match for the empire of the Ptolemies.

Of the fourth kingdom, it is said that it shall devour the whole earth, treading it down and breaking it in pieces. This statement can just never be applied to the kings of Egypt and Syria and who were not even capable of preserving what was left to them by their ancestors.

Daniel, as seen in chapter eight of the Book, regarded the empire of the Diadochi indeed as a continuation of that of Alexander the Great. (Diadochi – meaning “successors” - were the rival generals, families and friends of Alexander the Great who fought for control over his empire after his death). Those critics who support the Seleucid Empire scenario rest their view on a division made between the Median and the Persian

empires and who are, by any fair interpretation, a contradiction of Daniel's book.

Daniel chapter eight clearly shows that the prophet regarded the Medo-Persian power as one empire with two dominant races. While explaining the meaning of the words written on the wall to Belshazzar, the last king of the Babylonian Empire, Daniel said:

Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. (Da. 5:28 KJV)

MENE MENE TEKAL UPHARSIN literally means "numbered, numbered, weighed and split up."

The reason why MENE appears twice is that God's decision is final and irrevocable, a Hebraic way of placing emphasis. The Babylonian Empire's days were numbered; Belshazzar was weighed and, according to Daniel's interpretation, found wanting.

The last word on the wall is UPHARSIN but in Daniel's explanation, he used the word PERES which is the singular form of UPHARSIN. We therefore find a double meaning here, with the word PERES an allusion to PARAS (Persian).

In conclusion, then, PERES means "he split up; destroyed it" - i.e. God split up the kingdom and UPHARSIN, "they destroyed it" - that is the Medes and the Persians. The destruction shall be effected by the Medes and Persians, and so it was brought about when the Persian, Cyrus, with the united power of the Medes and Persians behind him, destroyed Babylon, bringing the Chaldean kingdom to an end.

Another point in which the fourth empire was diverse from all those previous empires, can be found in its constitution. The Babylonian, Medo-Persian and Macedonian empires all were monarchical whereas the Roman Empire was constituted as a republic and even under some of its emperors who acted like monarchs, the republican constitution was still preserved.

From my account of the history of the Roman Empire (History of Kingdoms Covered) the Roman Empire represented by the fourth beast was different from all other empires that reigned before. For a period of roughly 500 years, it functioned as a Republic placing power in the hands of the people via the Senate and all citizens could participate in government. Then when, for umpteenth reasons, the Republican

system failed, the government was placed into the hands of dictators known as "Emperors".

It is indeed not difficult to see why the fourth beast could not be compared to any known creature in the animal world. It was in all respects different from any of the three universal kingdoms represented by the lion, the bear and the leopard.

THE KINGDOM DEVoured AND CRUSHED THE WHOLE EARTH

From a small and insignificant little village on the banks of the river Tiber in 753 B.C., Rome grew into one of the largest empires in the history of the world with neighbouring territories throughout Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. The Latin phrase "Imperium Sine Fine" (empire without end) expressed the belief that the empire could neither be limited by time nor space.

Virgil⁵⁷, in his epic poem, The Aeniad, alludes that the size and influence of the Roman Empire were given to it by their supreme deity Jupiter. Rome's claim of universal dominion was renewed and perpetuated when the empire came under Christian rule in the 4th century.

During the reign of Trajan (98 – 117) the empire reached its largest expanse. It included an area of about 5 million square kilometres that is now divided and occupied by roughly forty different modern countries. The traditional estimate of the empire's population is placed between 55 and 60 million people, which would be almost one-fourth of the world's total population in the second century. It would also be the largest population of any unified political entity in the West until the mid-19th century. Recent demographic studies have argued for a population peak ranging from 70 million to more than 100 million inhabitants. As can be seen from the map below, the empire completely circled the Mediterranean, referred to as "mare nostrum" - "our sea" - by its conquerors.



<https://www.knowingthebible.net/studies/bible-maps>

Trajan's successor, Hadrian, adopted a policy of maintaining rather than expanding the empire. Borders were marked, and the frontiers patrolled. The more unstable a border was the more heavily it was fortified. Hadrian's Wall, on the border between England and Scotland, separated the Roman world from what was perceived as an ongoing barbarian threat, and to this day it still is the primary surviving monument of this effort. It can truly be said that this beast devoured the "whole earth".

The fourth kingdom, as symbolised by the fourth beast, is an accurate representation of the Roman Empire. This is true regarding the place it would occupy in the history of the world if we believe that the first three referred to the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, and the Macedonian kingdoms or empires.

It has already been shown that there is neither a need to regard the Medo-Persian Empire as divided into two empires and as such represented by two symbols, nor that the kingdom founded by Alexander, that is the Asiatic-Macedonian, should be regarded as distinct from that of its successors. On this assumption, everything in the symbol is fulfilled.

The mighty, terrific and powerful fourth beast, so unlike all the others, armed with iron teeth and brazen claws, trampling down and

stamping on all the earth, is a perfect representation of the Roman Empire. In every respect, the characteristics of the Roman Empire is well represented in the fourth beast.

Furthermore, this hypothesis corresponds well with the obvious interpretation of Daniel 2:33 and verse 40, where the same empire (Roman) is referred to in the image as the legs and feet of iron. It should be added here that this fourth kingdom should be regarded as having been a lengthy period of Roman power exerted and maintained in its diverse forms and during which era the Roman imperial reign was dominating the earth.

First the pagan Roman Empire, then, crumbling into separate sovereignties, it once again unified under the Holy Roman Empire but this time with the papacy central thereto. The fourth kingdom was then, as Daniel's vision indeed reveals, to be continued up until the establishment of the kingdom of the saints.

By implication then, the fourth kingdom will, in some or other form, remain until, at least, the kingdom of the saints has come or has been set up.

The truth is, that in prophecy the entire Roman dominion seems to be contemplated as one - one mighty and formidable power trampling down the liberties of the world; oppressing and persecuting the people of God - the true church; and maintaining an absolute and arbitrary dominion over the souls of men - as a mighty domination standing in the way of the progress of truth, and keeping back the reign of the saints on the earth. In these respects, the Papal dominion is, and has been, but a prolongation, in another form, of the influence of pagan Rome, and the entire domination may be represented as one and might be symbolized by the fourth beast in the vision of Daniel. When that power shall cease, we may, according to the prophecy, look for the time when the "kingdom shall be given to the saints," or when the true kingdom of God shall be set up all over the world.⁶⁷

TEN HORNS AROSE OUT OF THE FOURTH BEAST

Concerning the symbol of the ten horns, Bible interpreters, whether laymen or learned scholars are widely divided. It would therefore be

wise, I believe, to first take note of what the messenger said to Daniel concerning its symbolic meaning.

Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise... (Da. 7:23-24 NASB)

The fact that the ten horns would emerge from the midst of the fourth beast, by implication shows that they did not exist at the birth of the fourth kingdom. Rather, at a much later period in the history of this beast, something would happen to cause this kingdom to be broken up into ten, or at least ten minor sovereignties.

By the time Daniel had seen the rise of the little horn, the ten horns were already well in place on the head of the symbolic beast. It would then be logical to conclude, (a) that at least ten coexistent powers would somehow have emerged from one superpower, (b) that the ten horns do not indicate successive kingdoms reigning one after the other, (c) that they had the same origin, and (d) that the power of the original kingdom is now divided into many kingdoms.

It seems we should now inquire whether the Roman power was in fact distributed or divided into so many sovereignties by the time the little horn had sprung forth among them. Any good historical work on the Roman Empire will show how, in fact, the Roman Empire was absorbed in several kingdoms, or in comparison with the once mighty Roman Empire, a number of small sovereignties now occupying portions of the world that was once governed by Rome.

The number ten represents the number of notable tribes, mostly Germanic, and which, by the end of the fifth century, had infiltrated the Roman Empire, in the process having themselves become kingdoms. The nations represented by them are referred to as "the ten horns", even though the actual number of nations were constantly in fluctuation throughout their history. For purposes of consistent identification of the symbol, those nations and their descendants, regardless how many there were at any given time, are always referred to as "the ten horns".

According to Cantor,

The great invasions were not a war of the barbarians to defeat and subjugate the Roman Empire. Rather, the Germans sought to become part of the Empire and were fighting for concessions, in the form of land or money. The Roman Empire . . . became a sort of vacuum into which the Germans pushed their way. They came as settlers, as allies. . . . They did not defeat the Roman Empire in one cataclysmic battle; instead, they permeated the Roman world over the course of three centuries and transformed the fundamental nature of Roman civilization.⁹

He goes on saying that,

The city of Rome itself became no more than one of the many German kingdoms in western Europe. Although this by no means signified the death of the heritage of Roman culture or the end of the power of Rome in the East, the year 476 marked a fundamental turning point in the Empire (Ibid., p. 248).

The Roman army, which was the military force of ecclesiastical Rome's power, deteriorated to such an extent that by the fifth century it consisted mainly of barbarian tribes and adventurers. The core of the empire was no longer in Roman hands, however, the Roman Empire did not really "fall" because of invasion nor can we truly assign a date to its "fall."

We can therefore only say that, by the end of the fifth century, (a) the ancient city-state had lost its power, (b) a wealthy urban society had been replaced by rural landlords, serfs and peasants, (c) the Roman army dwindled to an insignificant number of men who were Roman in anything but name and (d) the Roman emperor and Senate had become powerless and just a mere form of political government.

GERMANIC TRIBES MIGRATE TO THE ROMAN EMPIRE

S

ince about the middle of the fourth century, Germanic and

Slavic tribes migrated into the Roman Empire and because the Romans regarded these people as barbarians these migrations are called the Barbarian Invasions. It is also known as the period that marked the transition from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, profound changes then manifesting within the Roman Empire as well as on the frontiers of the empire. Some of the tribes included in this mass migration are the Huns, Goths (Visigoths and Ostrogoths), Vandals, Bulgars, Alans, Suevi, Frisians and Franks.

During the years 300 to 500 Germanic peoples gained control of most areas of the former Western Roman Empire. The first to formally enter Roman territory in 376 was the Visigoths who fled before the Huns. The Romans accepted them on condition that they defend the Danube frontier. After a while, they rebelled and in 410 they invaded Italy and plundered Rome only to settle in Iberia where they founded a kingdom that lasted for about 300 years.

On the heels of the Visigoths the Ostrogoths, led by Theodoric the Great, followed, penetrating Roman territory, settling in Italy. In Gaul (present day France, Luxembourg, Belgium, most of Switzerland, parts of Northern Italy, parts of the Netherlands and Germany on the west bank of the Rhine), the Franks invaded Roman lands gradually and more peacefully during the fifth century. Their leaders were also generally accepted as rulers by the Roman-Gaulish population. They fended off challenges from the Alemanni, Burgundians and Visigoths and in the process, the Frankish kingdom became the heart of the future states of France and Germany.

Meanwhile, Britain was more slowly invaded and occupied by Angles, Saxons and Jutes. Another Germanic tribe, the Lombards, settled in northern Italy in the region now known as Lombardy.

RELIGION OF THE GERMANIC TRIBES

Except for the Franks and Anglo-Saxons who converted directly from paganism to orthodox, i.e., Nicene or Trinitarian, Catholicism, most of the Germanic nations adopted the Arian form of Christianity.

In all these cases the Germans embraced the Arian form of Christianity; none of the major Germanic peoples became officially Catholic until the conversion of the Franks under Clovis (496) and of the Burgundians under Sigismund. The reason for their adoption of Arianism rather than Catholicism is very obscure.^{16c}

Ulfila or Wulfila (Gothic for "little wolf") 311–383 was a Gothic bishop who translated the Bible into Gothic. Ulfila's parents were of Cappadocian Greek origin who was captured and enslaved by the Goths. They were Arian Christians and they managed to convert some of the Goths to their faith. Ulfila, who became a leader of his people at a young age, was consecrated as a bishop of the Christian Goths by the Arian bishop, Eusebius of Nicomedia in 341.

For seven years Ulfila performed episcopal duties among his people north of the Danube and when persecuted by non-Christian Goths, he settled with his followers in Moesia (Bulgaria). It was partly as a result of Ulfila's work that the Goths became and remained Arians for so long in the face of Catholicism. Of Ulfila's Bible, only fragments remained - parts of Genesis, Nehemiah, most of the gospels, and the whole of Second Corinthians, with several more fragments. Ulfila is said to have invented the Gothic alphabet he used.

The papacy, with the backing of Imperial Rome, has frequently declared all followers of Arianism "heretics" and "enemies of God". Many popes, Catholic emperors and kings made it their mission to extinguish Arianism altogether.

GERMANIC PEOPLES WHO TOOK OVER THE ROMAN EMPIRE

You will notice in the following that I deal with more than ten groups. The first ten are the ones generally considered to be the ten referred to

in the relevant prophecy. The others are likewise included also for your consideration and evaluation.

ALEMANNI

They were a confederacy of Germanic-speaking people who occupied the regions south of the Main and east of the Rhine rivers in present-day Germany. Many historians claim that the Alemanni first entered the historical records in 213 when Cassius Dio records the campaigns of Roman Emperor Caracalla and his dealings with the Alemanni.

The Alemanni wore Roman attire and followed some Roman social customs, but they were not "Romans" in the true sense of the word. They spoke their own language and kept their own culture. When they asked Caracalla for help against a neighbouring tribe, he saw no reason why he should not conquer them instead. From that day on they were a constant threat to the Roman Empire until they were defeated by Emperors Julian in 357 and Valentinian I in 367.

In 496 the Frankish king, Clovis I, conquered the Alemanni tribes and absorbed them into his kingdom. All that was left of the Alemanni was that their names lived on in the language of the region they had once inhabited and in the name given to Germany, Allemagne, in French and other languages.

Originally the Alemanni were pagans who converted to Christianity in the early 7th century but instead of the Catholic (Nicene or Trinitarian) form of Christianity, they followed the "heretical" Arian version thereof. Between the years 718 and 732, through the efforts of Boniface, a Catholic monk from England, the Alemanni were brought under papal control.

SUEVI (SUEBI)

They were a group of Germanic peoples which included the Marcomanni, Quadi, Hermunduri, Semnones and Langobardi (Lombards). In fear of the Huns, they crossed the Rhine into Spain in about 409 and settled mainly in the northwest (Gallaecia). By 447 the Suevi had spread over the Roman provinces of Lusitania and Baetica.

Although the Suevi entered Spain as pagans, they first converted to Arian Christianity round about 448 and between 555 and 575 they became Roman Catholic. They were first defeated by the Visigoths in 456, but remnants of the Suevi survived until about 585 when the kingdom was finally absorbed into the Visigoth kingdom.

VISIGOTHS

They entered Roman territory in 376 when they were attacked by the Huns and driven southward across the Danube. They were allowed to stay in the empire, but the demands of Roman officials soon drove them to revolt whereupon they plundered the Balkan provinces.

In 378 they defeated the army of emperor Valens who himself was killed in the ensuing battle. For four more years, they continued to wander in search of a place to settle. In 382 Valens' successor, Theodosius I, gave them land in Moesia provided they would defend the frontier.

It was apparently during this period that the Visigoths were converted to Arian Christianity. In 395, under the leadership of Alaric, they left Moesia moving first southward into Greece and then onwards to Italy, which they invaded repeatedly from 401 onward. In 410 they sacked Rome. When Alaric died, his successor, Ataulphus, led them to settle first in Gaul and then in Spain.

Theodoric I was the first Visigoth leader who can properly be described a monarch. In 475 Euric the son of Theodoric declared himself an independent king. He too was a fervent Arian. In 507 his son Alaric II was defeated and killed by Clovis I and the Franks.

They became Roman Catholic (Nicene) in 587 and in 621 they gained possession of the entire Spanish peninsula only to be finally defeated by the Moslems 711.

VANDALS

They fled westward from the Huns at the beginning of the fifth century. The Vandals, a Germanic people, entered Roman territory and in 409 they settled in Spain. In 429 under the leadership of Gaiseric, they crossed the Mediterranean and settled in North Africa. Four years later they captured Carthage establishing an independent kingdom which

lasted until 534. They also annexed Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily, and their pirate fleets controlled much of the western Mediterranean. Gaiseric's troops entered Italy, captured Rome in June 455 ransacking and plundering the city for fourteen days.

The Vandals were fervent Arian Christians, and their persecutions of Catholic Christians in Africa were at times fierce, particularly during the last years of the reign of Gaiseric's successor, Huneric (477–484). In 533 emperor Justinian's general Belisarius invaded North Africa and in 534 he destroyed the Vandal kingdom completely. Rome once again ruled, restoring the churches of the Catholic Christians. The Vandals played no further role in history.

FRANKS

They were a Germanic-speaking people who invaded the western Roman Empire in the 5th century. They established the most powerful Christian kingdom of early medieval western Europe. The name France (Francia) is derived from their name. In the mid-third century, the Franks tried to expand westward across the Rhine into Roman occupied Gaul, but they were unsuccessful. They were, however, more successful in the fourth century when they decided to again invade Gaul. In 358 a very weakened Rome had no choice but to leave the area between the Meuse and Scheldt rivers to the Franks.

When the Vandals invaded Gaul in 406, the Franks took advantage of the overstrained Roman defences, taking permanent control of the lands immediately west of the middle Rhine River. By the year 480, the Franks were firmly established in north-eastern Gaul. Clovis I forced the Frankish tribes to accept him as king and under his leadership, the united Franks brought all northern Gaul under his rule in 494.

In 507 Clovis I conquered the Visigoths who had by then established themselves in southern Gaul. The Franks were pagan, but Clovis converted to Roman Catholicism in 496 having been the first of the barbarians to do so. Mass adoption of Catholicism by the Franks served to unite them into one people. It also of course won them the support of the Roman Catholic clergy – those who laid claim to “orthodox Christianity,” and the remaining Gallo-Roman elements in Gaul, since most other Germanic tribes had adopted Arianism.

Clovis belonged to the Merovingian dynasty and under his successors, the Merovingians were able to extend Frankish power east of the Rhine. The Merovingian dynasty ruled the Frankish territories until they were supplanted by the Carolingian family in the 8th century. Charlemagne, a Carolingian who reigned between 768 and 814, again restored the western Roman Empire in cooperation with the papacy spreading Christianity into central and northern Germany.

BURGUNDIANS

They were an east-Germanic tribe who crossed the frozen Rhine River in 406 along with the Vandals, Suebi and Alemanni. They settled as foederati in the Roman province of Germania Secunda along the Middle Rhine. (Foederatus was any one of several outlying nations to which ancient Rome supplied benefits in exchange for military assistance). The Burgundians found Roman Gaul in a chaotic state.

In 411 The Burgundians, who supported the Gallo-Roman Senator Jovinus, set him up as a puppet emperor. Jovinus was soon dethroned, however, the forces of Emperor Honorius were not able to expel the Burgundians.

In 413 the emperor gave Gundahar (Gunther), the Burgundian king, the right to form a sovereign kingdom in the Rhine region. It was here that the Burgundians were converted to Arian Christianity. Gundahar started pushing westwards, but his troops were defeated, and he was killed. After his death, his heirs continued fighting the Franks. The Burgundian's were completely defeated by the Franks in 532 at the battle of Autun and two years later in 534, the Franks annexed Burgundy.

ANGELS, SAXONS AND JUTES

As a result of the decline of the Roman Empire, the Roman legions began to withdraw from Britain in 383 to secure the empire's borders elsewhere in mainland Europe. By 410 all Roman troops were withdrawn, and the Roman-British people had to fend for themselves. This led to the arrival of Germanic migrants in the east and southeastern England in and around 430. The main groups were Jutes from the Jutland peninsula (modern Denmark); Angles from Angeln in

southwest Jutland and Saxons from northwest Germany. Much fighting followed over the next hundred years or so as the invading kings and their armies established their kingdoms.

St. Augustine and his 40 missionaries from Rome brought orthodox (Nicene) Catholic Christianity to the pagan Anglo-Saxons of the rest of England in 597. After the conversion of the influential King Ethelbert of Kent, it spread rapidly through the land, carrying literacy and European culture in its wake. Augustine was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 601 and several great monasteries and centres of learning were established. Roman Catholicism, introduced in 597, was established by the Synod of Whitby in 664.

HERULI (KINGDOM OF ODOACER)

The Heruli were German auxiliary troops in Rome who mutinied on August 23, 476, ending the Western Roman imperial line. Was it really a Herulian kingdom, or simply a Herulian king who played an important role in Western civilisation? As a people group, they hold no major significance; but their leader, Odoacer, stands out distinctly in history.

Odoacer also called Odovacar, or Odovakar was the first barbarian to be called king of Italy. He assumed power in 476, and it is traditionally considered the end of the Western Roman Empire. Odoacer was a German warrior, and probably a member of the Sciri tribe. About 470 he entered Italy with the Sciri, joined the Roman army and rose to a position of command. Odoacer proclaimed king by his troops on August 23, 476, led his tribesmen in a revolt against Orestes, who had failed on his promise to give the tribal leaders land in Italy. Five days later Orestes was captured and executed in Placentia. Odoacer then deposed and exiled Orestes's young son, the emperor Romulus Augustulus.

Odoacer planned to keep the administration of Italy in his own hands while recognizing the overlordship of the Eastern emperor, Zeno. Zeno granted him the rank of patrician, but Odoacer styled himself "King." He refused to acknowledge Julius Nepos, Zeno's candidate, as Western emperor. Odoacer, who had the support of the Senate at Rome, was able to distribute land to his followers and although he was an

Arian Christian, he rarely intervened in the affairs of the Roman Catholic church.

In 480 Odoacer invaded Dalmatia and within two years conquered the region. Odoacer then attacked Zeno's westernmost provinces; the emperor responded by inciting the Rugi to attack Italy, but Odoacer defeated them in their own territory. The Ostrogothic king Theodoric, who was appointed king of Italy by Zeno in 488, invaded Italy in 489 and by August 490 he had captured almost the entire peninsula, forcing Odoacer to take refuge in Ravenna. When Odoacer was killed by Theodoric in 493, we hear no more about the Heruli.

In papal history, Odoacer figures as the author of a decree promulgated at the election of Felix II in 483, forbidding the pope to alienate any of the lands or ornaments of the Roman Church, and threatening any pope who should infringe this edict with anathema. This decree, however, was loudly condemned at a synod called by Pope Symmachus (502) as an unwarrantable interference of the civil power with the concerns of the church.

OSTROGOOTHS

After the collapse of the Hun Empire (455) the Ostrogoths under Theodoric the Great moved first to Moesia (475–488) and then to Italy. Theodoric became king of Italy in 493, and he died in 526. A period of instability then ensued in the ruling dynasty, provoking the Byzantine emperor Justinian to declare war on the Ostrogoths. In 538 Justinian's general, Belisarius expelled them from Rome, but the war continued for almost 20 years, causing untold damage to Italy. Eventually, the Ostrogoths, who were Arian Christians, lost their kingdom in 553 after which they disappeared from history forever.

LOMBARDS

They moved into Italy in 568. Italy was so to say defenceless after the Byzantine Empire's armies had overthrown the Ostrogothic kingdom there. The Lombard's invasion of northern Italy was virtually unopposed, and by late 569 they had conquered all the principal cities north of the Po River. At the same time, they occupied areas in the central and southern parts of the peninsula.

The Lombards converted from Arianism to Catholicism in the latter part of the 7th century. The invasion of papal territories by the Lombard kings Aistulf (reigned 749–756) and Desiderius (reigned 756–774) compelled Pope Adrian I to seek aid from the Frankish king Charlemagne. The Franks entered Italy in 773, Desiderius was captured, and Charlemagne became king of the Lombards as well as of the Franks. Lombard rule in Italy thus came to an end.

FRISIANS

Sources conflict with each other as to whether their territory was ever under Roman jurisdiction. If it were, the Romans, not the Frisians, would be the invaders. Indeed, this is not an example of a barbarian group migrating into Roman territory. It is also questioned whether or not they ever formed a self-contained political, cultural, or ethnic unit which might be called a "kingdom". Descendants of this people group still exist there today. The Frisians were pagan until forced to become Catholic in 750.

THURINGIANS

They first appeared sometime after 350. They were conquered by the Huns near the middle of the fifth century. But by the beginning of the sixth century, the Thuringians had an extensive kingdom stretching from the Elbe to the Danube, outside the territory proper of the old Roman Empire. In 531 they were attacked by both the Franks and the Saxons. The northern part of their kingdom was taken by the Saxons and the southern part becoming a Frankish territory. If occupying territory within the boundaries of the old Roman Empire is a qualification for being one of the ten horns, the Thuringians probably would not qualify. Some maps of the Roman Empire, however, do include what might have been the southern part of Thuringia.

From what we have learned above it should be noted that the Germanic kingdoms occupying Italy were firstly the kingdom of Odoacer followed by the kingdom of the Ostrogoths and lastly by the kingdom of the Lombards. These kingdoms posed the greatest hindrance to the development of the papacy. Their eventual defeat,

therefore, allowed the papacy to gain unchallenged supremacy in the West.

Regarding the breaking up of the Roman Empire into several smaller kingdoms, Barnes says the following:

To see that there is no difficulty in making out the number ten, or that some such distribution and breaking up of the one power is naturally suggested, I cast my eye on the historical chart of Lyman, and found the following kingdoms or sovereignties specified as occupying the same territory which was possessed by the Roman empire, and springing from that - namely, the Vandals, Alans, Suevi, Heruli, Franks, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Burgundians, Lombards, Britons.⁶⁷

Niccola Machiavelli,³⁷ in his account of the history of Florence, has mentioned these names: the Ostrogoths in Moesia, the Visigoths in Pannonia, the Sueves and Alans in Gascoign and Spain, the Vandals in Africa, the Franks in France, the Burgundians in Burgundy, the Heruli and Turingi in Italy, the Saxons and Angles in Britain, the Huns in Hungary, and the Lombards at first upon the Danube, afterwards in Italy.

Sir Isaac Newton proposed the following:

The kingdom of the Vandals and Alans in Spain and Africa, the kingdom of the Suevians in Spain, the kingdom of the Visigoths, the kingdom of the Alans in Gallia, the kingdom of the Burgundians, the kingdom of the Franks, the kingdom of the Britons, the kingdom of the Huns, the kingdom of the Lombards, and the kingdom of Ravenna.^{62b}

Compare also Duffield¹⁵ on the Prophecies. Another popular list is the Alemanni, Anglo-Saxons, Burgundians, Franks, Heruli, Lombards, Ostrogoths, Suevi, Vandals and Visigoths.



Arya, V. (2014). Central Europe 5th century CE. Ancient History Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/image/3007/>



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Central_Europe_5th_Century.jpg

Despite some slight variations in the arrangements proposed by scholars as well as some others which I have not mentioned, it is still remarkably easy to make out that number with such a degree of certainty. The fact that the lists show some variations is not surprising

at all if we bear in mind that, (a) these powers arose in the midst of great confusion, (b) one kingdom arose and another fell in rapid succession, and, (c) there was not the same degree of certainty of location and boundary of which there was in the old and established states.

What remains certain is that there has never been a case in which an empire of such vast power has been broken up into small sovereignties to which this description would so well apply as to the crumbling of the Roman Empire.

It is true that the Eastern part of the Roman Empire seems to be unaffected by this deterioration, nonetheless the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman Empire was only two geographical areas of the same empire and not two independent kingdoms. Some might entertain the idea that the Eastern portion of the Roman Empire could be represented by one of the ten horns although it would be difficult to defend such a notion.

THE LITTLE HORN

While Daniel looked

attentively at the horns, something remarkable happened to the beast,

...behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. (Da. 7:8 KJV)

Again the messenger explained to Daniel saying,

...and another shall rise after them, and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High and shall wear out the saints of the most High and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. (Da. 7:24-25 KJV)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LITTLE HORN.

Regarding the little horn, we should consider the following:

1. Another (horn) will arise after them.
2. He shall be diverse from the first.
3. Before him, three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots.
4. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man.
5. This horn had a mouth speaking great things against the Most-High.
6. This horn will wear out the saints of the Most-High.
7. This horn will attempt to alter times and law.

8. The saints of God will be given into the hands of the little horn for a given time.
9. The little horn will ultimately be judged.

ANOTHER HORN, A LITTLE ONE, CAME UP AMONG THEM

As for this little horn, several points should be noted:

1. Daniel “was contemplating the horns” that is, he looked at the horns, for how long and why we do not know. However, while he was still gazing at the horns, he suddenly noticed that another horn, a little horn, came up among or between the other ten horns. From this, we can presume that when he first saw the beast the little horn was not there. It was only after some time had passed that he realised that a new horn was beginning to form appearing between the other horns. It is a clear sign that the little horn would appear later in the history of this kingdom.
2. The little horn grew up among (Hebrew transliteration *bein* = among or between) the others, therefore, starting from the same source as the others and belonging to the same beast. The fact that the little horn sprang forth from among or between the other horns is an indication that the new power symbolised, would not be a foreign power, but rather one that would arise out of the main kingdom itself, or that it would grow up in the main kingdom.
3. It was a little horn. This is an indication that the power symbolised by this new horn would be, at first, very small, but that it would ultimately grow in status and power to at least the same but probably greater power than that of the other horns, using its power to uproot three of the other ten horns. The fulfilment of this would, therefore, not necessarily be attained in military conquest or a revolution but it would rather lie in some power within the state that has had a humble beginning, and it would also be one which slowly developed to the point where it would absorb or took over a considerable portion of the authority of the kingdom represented by the fourth beast.

HE SHALL BE DIFFERENT

The little horn would be different from the other horns. It stands to reason then, that the little horn would execute its power in a different manner than the others would conduct their affairs. It is important to know that power is often, in the Scriptures, symbolised by a horn, also that it is not necessarily, or only, confined to military strength. A person or institution can indeed wield power over another person or institution without using any form of military force.

THREE HORNS WERE PULLED OUT

As a result of the growth of the new horn, three or a third, of the others were plucked out. The little horn must then have “grown” to the point where it had enough power to subdue three kings. Its “power” or influence would at first be insignificant, but it would grow to a significant force. The fulfillment of this would be found in some power that would be subtle in its subjugation of and its influence over other powers. There is no evidence suggesting an act of violence or revolution in the empire of the fourth beast since only three of the ten horns were uprooted.

Barnes says:

the proper meaning of the word used to express this (תַּעֲקֹר 'ethe'āqârâv) is, that they were rooted out - as a tree is overturned by the roots, or the roots are turned out from the earth.⁶⁷

It seems that as this little horn grew in stature and influence it came into direct competition with the others, causing a portion of them to be forced out and disappear. The implication is that some of the original ten kingdoms will either lose their dominions or their temporal status and that the void left by them will be filled by this new and upcoming power. The number three would either indicate that three parts of the ten were absorbed by the little horn or that a considerable portion of the total power held by the others would be absorbed by the little horn.

THIS HORN POSSESSED EYES LIKE THE EYES OF A MAN

Eyes express intelligence. We see this in Ezekiel's vision:

Their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings and the wheels were full of eyes all around, the wheels belonging to all four of them.
(Ez. 10:12 NASB)

Here the eyes are a symbol of the omniscience of God. The eyes of the little horn suggest that it would be remarkably sagacious, i.e., wise, clever, canny and shrewd. We should, therefore, look for a power that would make wise and intelligent plans; that would have clear views of policy; that would be shrewd and far-seeing in its counsels and purposes and a power that would be skilled in diplomacy.

A MOUTH UTTERING GREAT BOASTS

This is an indication of pride and arrogance. This is explained in Da. 7:25 as meaning that the one referred to here would "speak words against the Most-High". The Most-High is, without doubt, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It seems that the little horn would be proud, ambitious and particularly arrogant and to such an extent that it would speak out at, or against the Most-High. The Chaldee word, *tsad*, used in Da. 7:25, literally means at, against, or concerning, although it most naturally refers to self-exaltation to a place alongside God.

Therefore, the phrase speaking out against the Most-High, would be fulfilled in one that would blaspheme God either directly or indirectly, or one who would, through self-exaltation, place himself alongside or in the place of God.

WILL WEAR OUT THE SAINTS OF THE MOST-HIGH

This new institution will use its power to wear down the saints of the Most-High. That is, it would persecute and/or control the real saints – those who are true followers of God.

We tend to think of persecution as something physical, something that is normally associated with painful torture of the body. However,

persecution against the soul of man, though not as painful as the torture of one's body, often has a much greater and longer lasting effect on the one being persecuted.

For instance, withholding the Word of God from ordinary people or, to deliberately indoctrinate them with half-truths can have a devastating and lifelong effect on those targeted by this kind of spiritual persecution. The little horn then would use both forms of oppression to execute its power over the saints of God.

WILL ATTEMPT TO ALTER TIMES AND LAWS

This powerful institution would intend to make alterations in times and in law. In order to do this, it would have to claim legislative power, that is the power to change established customs and laws. The King James Version reads: "...and think to change times and laws". The Hebrew word *sebar* more properly means to hope, and the idea is that he hopes to be able to change times and laws. In other words, he would have a strong desire to make changes to existing times for festivals or other occasions, and to existing laws in order to accomplish his own ends.

The word "times" - *zemanim* – properly refer to some designated times such as times appointed to festivals. Lengerke⁶⁷ translates it as Fest-Zeiten - "festival times" and explains it as meaning the holy times, festival days (Lev. 23:2, 4, 37 and 44). These are set apart as festivals or fasts consecrated to the services of religion, and the little horn would hope and desire to have control of these periods and to change, alter, abolish or even substitute them with others to accomplish its own purposes.

These seasons have had a direct connection with the state and progress of religion and to have power over them is to have control over the religion of the nation. The word laws may refer to any law but in the context of this prophecy, it would more properly refer to the laws pertaining to religion. Again, Lengerke explains it as referring to laws of religion or even religion as a whole. The little horn would hope and desire to have control over these, and it would claim to have the right to change or abolish existing laws and also to institute new ones.

THEY WILL BE GIVEN INTO HIS HANDS FOR A GIVEN TIME

In other words, the little horn will have control over them for a defined period of time. The question is, who are the "they" over which it will have control? Would it be the laws, the people or the powers referred to? Many scholars believe that it is the "saints of the Most-High" who will be delivered into the hands of this new power.

Although this is not clearly expressed, it is perhaps the most natural construction, implying that the little horn would have jurisdiction and absolute power over the saints during this period of time. This new force will exercise control over the mind and soul of those people in its power. The period of time is expressed as a time, times and half a time.

As expected, there has been and still is a great diversity of opinion among expositors regarding the meaning of this phrase. Also, many of the controversies regarding future events rest on the explanation attached to this expression and the similar expressions which also occur in the Book of Revelations. First of all, and perhaps most important, we should examine its literal and proper meaning.

The Chaldee phrase reads - *ad iddan we-iddanin u-pelag iddan* - until a time and times and the dividing of time. According to Strong's¹⁰⁹ the Chaldee word "ad" can also be rendered as within,

...that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days... (Da.6:12 KJV)

The phrase can, therefore, be translated as, "until, unto, for or within" a time, times and half a time. Although it must be said that most of our English translations render it as "until" or "for".

The word "iddan" translated as "time" is a word which in itself does not designate any definite and/or fixed period other than what our English word "time" does. As far as the word is concerned in this prophecy, it could indicate a day, a week, a month, a year, or any larger or smaller division of time.

However, from the construction of the phrase, we assume that "time" is one period, "times" are two periods and "the dividing of time" is half a period. In total, we are then looking at a period of time that would be three and a half times or periods long. Up to this point, the

majority of expositors throughout the ages are generally in agreement. As for the actual length of time the phrase represents we, however, have been showered with numerous explanations of which the following are some of the more popular:

1. Some argue that we have no right to assume that the word iddan, "a time" is any definite time such as a day or a year. The German Calvinist theologian, Peter Lange⁷⁵ argued that the total duration of this time of affliction is divided into three distinct periods, that is one, two and one half and in no way indicating the real measure of time in the prophet's mind.

Lange believes that it must remain an open question whether ordinary calendar years are intended, or whether mystical periods are referred to and which are measured by a standard not known to men, but only to God. He concludes that the period of three and a half is symbolically significant, inasmuch as it is half of seven years. Therefore, "a time, and times, and a half time" represent a time of suffering that is abbreviated by one-half, or that is interrupted at the middle.

2. A very large number of expositors believe that the word "time" in this prophecy equals one literal year, giving us a total time period of three and a half literal years. The reasoning behind this, according to Barnes is that,

the word time may be viewed as denoting a year rather than a week, a month, or any other period because a year is a more marked and an important portion of time, and because a day, a week, a month, is so short that it cannot be reasonably supposed that it is intended. As there is no larger natural period than a year – no cycle in nature that is so marked and obvious as to be properly suggested by the word time, it cannot be supposed that any such cycle is intended. And as there is so much particularity in the language used here, "a time, and times, and half a time," it is to be presumed that some definite and marked period is intended and that it is not time in general. It may be presumed, therefore, that in some sense of the term the period of a year is referred to.⁶⁷

At this point, expositors are again divided in their application of this concept. Many believe that the three-and-a-half years should be interpreted as literal years while others hold to a symbolic application of the language as explained in the next paragraph.

3. There are those who believe that the three-and-a-half years actually represents a much longer period of time, that is, each day standing for one literal year and giving then a total of twelve-hundred-and-sixty literal years. What follows is an explanation of the reasoning behind this theory and in which the so-called day-year principle plays an eminent role.

In Daniel 4:16 (KJV) we read "...and let seven times pass over him," "him" being Nebuchadnezzar. It is generally understood that the period of his madness lasted seven years. Also,

Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. (Da. 9:24 NASB)

Almost everyone acknowledges that the seventy weeks are not meant to be literal, but rather that it indicates seventy weeks of years where one week has seven days and each day represents one literal or actual year. Therefore, seventy times seven equals 490 literal years. This is probably the most known application of the day-year principle.

In Numbers we see that the Israelites are punished for their unbelief:

According to the number of days which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day you shall bear your guilt a year, even forty years, and you will know My opposition. (Num. 14:34 NASB)

Here the punishment equals one year's dwelling in the wilderness, namely for each day that they spied in Canaan. A year in the days of Daniel consisted of 360 days. Applying this to the three-and-a-half years of the prophecy, we get 360 (one year) plus 720 (two years) plus 180 (half a year) giving a total of one-thousand-two hundred-and-sixty years.

In Revelation 12 verses 6 and 14 we get a direct relationship between time, times and half a time and 1260 years:

Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. (Rev. 12:6 NASB)

But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. (Rev. 12:14 NASB)

4. Another interpretation some expositors consider is that the time, times and half a time express the progression of time coming to a sudden end. So, if time is equal to one followed by times which is equal to two, then we would naturally expect that the next period would be three times, followed by four times, etcetera, but the progression of time is cut short in the third time period.

For the oppressed, it may seem that their suffering would never end, but then suddenly, through divine intervention, the power of the oppressor is taken away and the oppressed are set free. The suggestion then is that the time, times and half a time amounts to an unknown length of accumulated time.

From all said thusfar, the only question of importance with regard to the time designated in Daniel's prophecy is, (a) whether it express three-and-a-half years literally, or (b) whether a symbolic method is to be adopted, namely that each one of the days would represent one actual year and so that the time referred to, would then be equal to 1260 actual years, or (c) should we adopt the idea that these periods referred to can only be measured by a standard not known to men, but only to God.

Naturally, as might be expected, all the options rendered by expositors throughout the ages are questionable, each creating its own particular positive and/or negative criticism. Past and present analysts and commentators have always been and probably always will be divided on this issue.

In our examination of the relevant passage, we should look at it exegetically, that is doing a critical analysis of the language of the text

apart from its application. Our analysis should then be, if at all possible, stripped of all bias towards any application we may favour. Although absolute certainty may not be obtained, the following may be regarded as exegetically possible:

1. The language does not forbid the application to a literal year. Nothing in the language itself could be regarded as violated should “time” be interpreted as a literal year.
2. The same is true concerning the symbolic application of the language – taking it for a much longer period than three-and-a-half literal years, i.e., regarding each day as standing for a year giving us 1260 literal years in total. This application of time is neither a violation of prophetic usage nor is it forbidden by the nature of prophetic language, where nothing is more common than symbols. Furthermore, there are actual instances in which such an interpretation must be understood. For instance, the prophet Ezekiel was commanded to lie upon his right side for forty days (Eze. 4:6) and it is explicitly said that “forty days I assign you, a day for each year”. No one can doubt that it would be strictly consistent with prophetic usage to suppose that the time in Da. 7:25 might be symbolic, and therefore, a longer time might be referred to than the literal interpretation would require. See also Num. 14:34.

It should be noted that there are some circumstances which would make the symbolic application of the language more probable. Among these circumstances are the following:

1. In the prophecies, very few instances can be referred to in which time is meant to be understood literally. It is more common that the designation is made by some or other symbol, some remark or some peculiarity of the time or age referred to.
2. In this prophecy of Daniel, time occurs in the midst of symbols, in fact, all are symbols – the beasts, the horns, the little horn, etcetera, and it would seem to be much more probable that such a method would be adopted to designated time referred to than the literal method.
3. On the examination of the passage under discussion, it is quite obvious that the events do extend far into the future, in fact, far

beyond what would be expressed by the brief period of three-and-a-half years.

THE LITTLE HORN WILL ULTIMATELY BE JUDGED

The messenger explained to Daniel, that there would be a solemn judgment in regard to this power – the little horn - and that the power given to it over the saints for a defined time, would be taken away and destroyed:

But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. (Da.7:26 NASB)

Most analysts see in this verse the total destruction of the little horn, but is this what was meant or not? The International Standard Version reads:

Nevertheless, the court will convene, and his authority will be removed, annulled, and destroyed forever.

It is the little horn's **authority** or power over the saints that will be taken away and destroyed. The messenger does not say by whom this would be done, only that it will be done, and that the destruction of its rulership will be final. The Modern King James translation reads: "*But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his rulership...*"

Although the little horn will ultimately be destroyed, it is fair to reason that he may still exist for some time after he lost his controlling power.

Finally, the dominion, i.e., the ruling power, will be given to the saints of the Most-High and all nations will serve God. The implication is that this is emphatic and that the saints will then be free from the oppressive power of the little horn and they will then be under the direct authority of the Most-High. God shall reign in the hearts and lives of all that serve Him.

WHO IS REPRESENTED BY THE LITTLE HORN?

After all that has been said about the rise and growth of the little horn, it is time to comment on who is being represented by this symbol. In

reference to the little horn, two opinions or classes of interpretations stand out and therefore they need to be looked at.

The first is that it refers primarily and exclusively to Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the kings of Syria. In opposition to this opinion, the little horn points to the rise and character of the papal power.

In order to establish which of the above is the “true” interpretation or rather which one is the more logical and exegetical “correct” rendering of the meaning of the prophecy, it will be proper to consider both interpretations.

THE CASE OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES

A

large number of very respectable interpreters, among whom

are Lengerke, Maurer, Stuart and many more, suppose that it is very clear that the little horn refers to Antiochus Epiphanes. Stuart^{54c} says that there is no room for doubt that the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes is described in Daniel 7 verses 8, 20 and 24.

Antiochus Epiphanes, the son of Antiochus the Great, reigned over Syria from 175 B.C. until 164 B.C. He was bloodthirsty and a bitter enemy of the Jews and his tyranny against them are fully detailed in the first and second book of Maccabees. His proper name was Antiochus IV, but he took upon himself the title "Epiphanes," which means "illustrious one" or "god manifest."

According to Stuart the facts concerning Antiochus, as far as they have a bearing on the application of the prophecy of Daniel, are:

In the year 168 before Christ, in the month of May, Antiochus Epiphanes was on his way to attack Egypt, and he detached Apollonius, one of his military confidants, with 22,000 soldiers, in order to subdue and plunder Jerusalem. The mission was executed with entire success. A horrible slaughter was made of the men at Jerusalem, and a large portion of the women and children, being made captives, were sold and treated as slaves. The services of the temple were interrupted, and its joyful feasts were turned into mourning, 1 Macc. 1:37-39. Soon after this, the Jews, in general, were compelled to eat swine's flesh and to sacrifice to idols. In December of that same year, the temple was profaned by introducing the statue of Jupiter Olympus; and on the 25th of that month, sacrifices were offered to that idol on the altar of Jehovah. Just three years after this last event, namely, December 25, 165 B.C., the temple was expurgated by Judas Maccabeus, and the worship of Jehovah restored. Thus, three years and a half, or almost

exactly this period, passed away, while Antiochus had complete possession and control of everything in and around Jerusalem and the temple. It may be noted, also, that just three years passed, from the time when the profanation of the temple was carried to its greatest height - namely, by sacrificing to the statue of Jupiter Olympus on the altar of Jehovah, down to the time when Judas renewed the regular worship. I mention this last circumstance in order to account for the three years of Antiochus' profanations, which are named as the period of them in Josephus, Ant. xii. 7, Section 6. This period tallies exactly with the time during which the profanation as consummated was carried on if we reckon down to the period when the temple worship was restored by Judas Maccabeus. But in Prooem. ad Bell. Jud. Section 7, and Bell. Jud. 1. 1, Section 1, Josephus reckons three years and a half as the period during which Antiochus ravaged Jerusalem and Judea.^{54c}

In general, the above facts are correct, however, the detaching of Apollonius to attack Jerusalem did not happen when Antiochus was on his way to Egypt. It happened on his return from Egypt, and it was about two years after he had taken Jerusalem.

In the fifth chapter of the second book of Maccabees we read that while Antiochus was busy in Egypt, a rumour was spread that he had been killed. In Judea, the deposed High Priest, Jason, gathered a force of at least a thousand soldiers and made a surprise attack on the city of Jerusalem. Menelaus, the High Priest appointed by Antiochus, was forced to flee Jerusalem during this riot. Antiochus was enraged because he had been defeated in Egypt by the Romans and to vent his wrath, he turned on the Jews. He ordered his soldiers to cut down without mercy those whom they met and to slay those who took refuge in their houses. There was subsequently a massacre of young and old. Women and children were brutally killed, virgins and infants mercilessly slaughtered. In the brief span of three days, eighty thousand were lost, forty thousand meeting a violent death, and the same number sold into slavery.

Two years prior to this event Antiochus himself took Jerusalem, killing forty thousand Jews, taking about the same number captive and selling them in slavery. He also forced himself into the temple, entered the most holy place and offered a pig on the altar of burnt offering. To show his contempt for the temple and the Jewish religion, he sprinkled

the broth over every part of the temple in order to thoroughly pollute it. He also took the altar of incense, the showbread table and the golden candlestick with him to Antioch, the capital city of Syria. He appointed Philip, a Phrygian, known as a man with a cruel and barbarous temper, to govern over the Jews.

On his return from Egypt, two years later, he sent Apollonius to attack the Jews in Jerusalem. Apollonius waited quietly until the Sabbath, and then made his attack. He filled the city with blood, set it on fire, demolished the houses and pulled down the walls. He erected a strong fortress over against the temple from which he could attack those who would attempt going up to the temple to worship. Since then the temple became deserted and the daily offerings were no longer performed until much later when, under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus, the temple was again purified and reconsecrated to the worship of God.²⁹

Supposing that the prophecy relates to Antiochus, we can see there are admittedly remarkable coincidences and it is on these coincidental grounds that the prophecy is applied to him. The following circumstances may then be applicable:

1. In general, we would expect that the power represented by the little horn, would be cruel, and none could better fit the image of Antiochus Epiphanes.
2. His arrogance and blasphemy - “speaking great words against the Most-High.” It is quite easy to find what would be a fulfilment of this in the character of Antiochus. We can call to mind things such as his barging into the most holy places (the Holy and the Most Holy Place) where only the consecrated priesthood could enter, his setting up of Jupiter's statue in the temple, offering unclean flesh (a pig) on the altar, proving his intense contempt of the Jews and their worship of a living God, causing an abrupt end to the compulsory daily sacrifices at the temple.
3. His making war with the “saints” and wearing them out is clear from the wars he waged against the Jews and the savage slaughter of so many of them.
4. His attempt to “change times and laws” may be seen in his persistent interference with the laws of the Jews.

5. The time span of his suppression of the "saints" is the most remarkable coincidence. If this is not to be regarded as referring exclusively to Antiochus, it must be explained as, (a) that it is one of those coincidences which does happen in history or, (b) as having a double reference, primarily referring to Antiochus, however, in a secondary way – and maybe in a more important sense – referring to other events and which have a strong resemblance thereto. In other words, this language is such that it relates to two similar classes of events.

There are, however, so many objections to this view that it seems to be almost impossible that he is the protagonist in this prophetic drama. Among these objections are the following:

1. In order to make the little horn applicable to Antiochus, it is necessary to divide the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians presenting them as two separate kingdoms. For this interpretation the kingdoms indicated by the four beasts would successively be, (a) the Chaldean or Babylonian dynasty, (b) the Median kingdom, (c) the Persian kingdom and, (d) the Macedonian dynasty of Alexander the Great. Apart from other difficulties encountered, the unbeatable objection to this is that, so far as the kingdoms of the Medes and the Persians are mentioned in Scripture and so far as the part they play in the fulfilment of prophecy, they are always mentioned as one. They appear as one; they act as one and they are seen as one, especially when they are spoken of as succeeding the kingdom of Babylon.

Before the kingdoms of the Medes and the Persians united, acting as one kingdom, they had coexisted with the kingdom of Babylon. However, it was only after this period in history, that they, in the proper sense of the word, could lay claim to "successor" of Babylon as depicted in the prophetic symbols. Barnes quotes Schlosser (p. 243) who said,

...the kingdom of the Medes and Persians is to be regarded as in fact one and the same kingdom, only that in the change of the dynasty another branch obtained the authority.⁶⁷

The Medes and the Persians are historically always blended together. In their laws, their customs and their religion, they are

mentioned as one. See Est. 1:3, Est. 1:18-19; Est. 10:2; Da. 5:28; Da. 6:8, Da. 6:12 and Da. 6:15.

2. On the assumption that the fourth beast represents the kingdom of Alexander and his successors, it is impossible to determine who is meant by the “ten horns” of the fourth beast (Da.7:7), and the “ten kings” (Da. 7:4) who are represented by these. All the statements in Daniel referring to the Macedonian kingdom (Da. 7:6, 8:8, 8:22) imply that the Macedonian Empire, at the death of its founder, would be divided into four great powers or monarchies.

This is a well-known historical fact. So, who were the ten kings Daniel was prophesying about and who were trapped under the rule of this general Macedonian dominion? Some expositors allege that they were ten Syrian kings and that the eleventh horn (the little horn) is Antiochus Epiphanes. It is, however, impossible to determine this exact number of Syrian kings from history. The kings listed by these expositors are also not of the same dynasty, that is either Syria, Macedonia or Egypt, but these kings were from different kingdoms. Grotius, for example, lists five Syrian and five Egyptian kings, but this does not tie in with the prophecy representing these kings as belonging to (or emerging from) one and the same power.

3. Some scholars in support of the Antiochus exposition view the four beasts as, (a) the Babylonian kingdom, (b) the united kingdom of the Medes and the Persians, (c) the kingdom of Alexander and, (d) the kingdoms that sprang forth from Alexander's divided kingdom.

In order to explain this properly, it is necessary to suppose that at the death of Alexander, when his kingdom was divided into four Macedonian empires, one of them, the Seleucid Empire, emerged as the empire symbolised by the fourth beast. Unfortunately, this too is contrary to the whole representation of the Macedonian Empire as portrayed to us in Daniel 8.

In this chapter, Daniel saw, in a vision, a ram with two horns. One of the horns of the ram was higher than the other (Da. 8:3). He also saw a goat that came rushing out of the west, moving so fast his

feet not touching the ground (Da. 8:5). Daniel's goat had a prominent horn between his eyes. He was filled with anger against the ram, attacking it without hesitation yet in the process, breaking its horns.

The ram was thrown to the ground and the goat trampled him down, while no one was able to save the ram (Da. 8:7). The goat grew more and more arrogant, but at the height of his power, his horn was broken, and, in its place four prominent horns came up each pointing in a different direction (Da. 8:8). From the midst of these four horns, a little horn emerged and whose power extended towards the south and the east and towards the Promised Land (Israel). It attacked the people of Jehovah and resisted their leader. It also succeeded in stopping the daily sacrifices and ruining the temple (Da. 8:8 – 11).

At this point in the vision Gabriel, the Angel, explained to Daniel the meaning of the vision, explicitly saying that the ram with the two horns is the kingdoms of Media and Persia with the goat representing the kingdom of Greece. The prominent horn of the goat is its first king and the four horns that appeared in place of the broken horn, would be the four kingdoms into which that nation (the Macedonian kingdom) would be divided. However, and this is the crux, **they would not be as strong as the first kingdom** (Da.8:20 – 22).

Here we have a clear explanation that the Greek or Macedonian kingdom of Alexander the Great, first king of the Macedonian Empire, conquered the Medo-Persian Empire, and that, at his death, his kingdom was divided into four Greek kingdoms, however, none of the four matched the power of Alexander's kingdom.

The little horn that grew out of one of the four horns of the goat, is in all probability Antiochus Epiphanes, but it is clear that the little horn of Daniel 8 is not the little horn of Daniel 7. We can, therefore, conclude that the explanation given to Daniel by Gabriel negates the view given at the beginning of this paragraph.

4. One more objection to the assumption that Antiochus is the “little horn” of Daniel 7, is that the one who was represented by the “little horn” would continue until “the Ancient of days should sit,” and

evidently until the kingdom is taken by the one having the likeness of the Son of man (Da. 7:9-10, Da. 7:13-14, Da. 7:21-22 and Da. 7:26).

We know that Antiochus died about 164 years before Jesus came to earth and there is no way showing that he continued until the Messiah appeared on the scene.

THE CASE OF THE PAPACY

We will now focus on whether the things referred to in the

vision concerning the little horn can actually apply to the papacy. But first: What is meant by the term “papacy”? The word is derived from the Greek word “pappas”, and in Latin “papa” which in the English language means “father”. The papacy is the office and jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome, that is the pope, who presides over the central government of the Roman Catholic Church. The term pope was originally applied to all the bishops in the West. However, in 1073 Pope Gregory VII restricted its use to the bishop of Rome, thereby officially confirming a practice that had existed since the ninth century.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE PAPAL CHURCH

The Papal Church, with its headquarters in Rome, is without any trace of doubt an impressive political and ecclesiastical institution. It is also obvious that the Papal Church differs sharply from the so much smaller first century Christian church in Rome and of whom the apostle Paul said:

First of all, I give praise to my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because news of your faith has gone into all the world. (Rom. 1:8 ISV)

The early home churches, such as the church in Rome, that were led by their elders, adhered to the authority of the Word of God as received in the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus Christ, the writings of the Apostles and the Old Testament. The leaders of these Christian assemblies had a true and living faith in God’s grace as expressed in the gospel.

The faith of the Christian assemblies (churches) in Rome lived on for another two to two-and-a-half centuries in which they, and the

other Christian assemblies in other jurisdictions, strove to stay true to the gospel that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3).

It is true, however, that the Christian churches were constantly bombarded with "foreign" ideas, heathen philosophies and doctrines, and as time went by many unapostolic ideas penetrated the church doctrinal system, slowly but surely conditioning the minds and hearts of the believers in conformity with the ruling church's prescriptions. Subsequently, many of the later so-called "truths" adopted by the church in the second, third and fourth centuries, would indeed have been totally foreign to the apostles of Jesus Christ.

For the early believers in Rome, it was unthinkable that the church would ever adopt a system whereby the fellowship of the believers would soon adopt a rigid ecclesiastical system. A system in which the flexible, Spirit-directed, spontaneous and interactive fellowship of believers would be transformed to an unbending hierarchical religious organisation. Yes, a system where a whole array of church-qualified priests, bishops, cardinals, headed by a sought-after elected papacy would take unforbidden control over the people of God.

Equally unthinkable would be the concept of "most holy Roman Pontiff", or the idea that Mary, the mother of Jesus, would be addressed in prayer as "All Holy One" and "the mother of God", let alone be asked to intercede for them. Did not Jesus say,

You must not be called 'Teacher,' because you are all equal and have only one Teacher. And you must not call anyone here on earth 'Father,' because you have only the one Father in heaven. Nor should you be called 'Leader,' because your one and only leader is the Messiah? (Matt. 23:8-10 GNB)

However, the division between the clergy and the laymen quickly became the accepted base from which the new church system could operate culminating in a hierarchy of clerical rulers subjecting their following to unquestionable authority.

It was not long after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ that a religious movement, later known as Christianity, was born in Jerusalem. About 120 men and women, who gathered together in prayer, experienced the fulfilment of John the Baptist's prophecy:

“...he shall baptise you in Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt. 3:11). This event is generally referred to as the Day of Pentecost.

Driven by God’s Spirit they began to evangelise, starting in Jerusalem and moving out to the rest of the Roman Empire extending even to other parts of the world. However, the rapid spread of this new faith was not well received by all and it was also not long after this that advocates of this new faith had to face all kinds of persecution.

History tells us that the Romans were known to be tolerant of existing religions with which they came into contact. Every time they conquered a foreign land, they generally allowed the people of that land to continue worshipping their gods as long as they did not cause trouble for Rome. From what we read in the New Testament, we know that Rome allowed the Jews in Judea to worship the God of their fathers without any interference whatsoever. However, we also know that when the Jews rebelled against them, round about the middle of the first century, they lashed back with the full force of Roman authority reducing to rubble their temple in Jerusalem and the city.

At first, the Romans were under the impression that this so-called Christianity was just an offshoot of Judaism and as such, they on the whole left them alone. However, as more and more Jews began to reject Christ distancing themselves from Christianity, Rome increasingly began to see it as a new religion and, unfortunately, one which quickly became a threat to the empire. Christians believed that Jesus Christ alone was their king and not the emperor of Rome, and this did not sit well with Rome.

PERSECUTIONS OF CHRISTIANS

During the reign of Emperor Nero, in about 64, the church in Rome was persecuted, and many of the believers were martyred and put to death in a most horrendous manner. After Nero and until the reign of Diocletian, persecutions against Christians occurred on and off and here and there throughout the empire. Under Emperor Severus (193 – 211), however, Christians suffered appallingly.

Close to the end of Diocletian’s reign, an intense organised persecution, known as The Great Persecution of Christians, was launched, lasting for ten years from 303 to 313. The ten-days tribulation that the church of Smyrna was going to face (Rev.3:10), in

all probability, refers to this persecution. The Diocletianic Persecution was the Roman Empire's last, largest and bloodiest official persecution of Christians. Many Christians died a martyr's death, yet the persecutions could not exterminate the Christian faith. In fact, it caused many to become stronger than ever in Christ increasing their ability to preach the message with stronger conviction of heart.

THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH IN THE THIRD CENTURY.

Concerning the overall condition of Christianity in the third century, Adolf Harnack, in his famous lectures, "What is Christianity?", gave the following summary:

If we place ourselves at about the year 200, about a hundred or a hundred and twenty years after the apostolic age, not more than three or four generations had gone by since that age came to an end,--what kind of spectacle does the Christian religion offer? We see a great ecclesiastical and political community, and side by side with it, numerous "sects" calling themselves Christian, but denied the name and bitterly opposed. That great ecclesiastical and political community presents itself as a league of individual communities spanning the empire from end to end. Although independent they are all constituted essentially alike and interconnected by one and the same law of doctrine, and by fixed rules for the purposes of intercommunion. The law of doctrine seems, at first sight, to be of small scope, but all its tenets are of the widest significance; and together they embrace a profusion of metaphysical, cosmological, and historical problems, give them definite answers, and supply particulars of mankind's development from the creation up to its future form of existence. Jesus' injunctions for the conduct of life are not included in this law of doctrine; as the "rule of discipline" they were sharply distinguished from the "rule of faith." Each Church, however, also presents itself as an institution for public worship, where God is honoured in conformity with a solemn ritual. The distinction between priests and laymen is already a well-marked characteristic of this institution; certain acts of divine worship can be performed only by the

priest; his mediation is an absolute necessity. It is only by mediation that a man can approach God at all, by the mediation of right doctrine, right ordinance, and a sacred book. The living faith seems to be transformed into a creed to be believed; devotion to Christ, into Christology; the ardent hope for the coming of "the kingdom," into a doctrine of immortality and deification; prophecy, into technical exegesis and theological learning; the ministers of the Spirit, into clerics; the brothers, into laymen in a state of tutelage; miracles and miraculous cures disappear altogether, or else are priestly devices; fervent prayers become solemn hymns and litanies; the "Spirit" becomes law and compulsion. At the same time, individual Christians are in full touch with the life of the world, and the burning question is, "In how much of this life may I take part without losing my position as a Christian?" This enormous transformation took place within a hundred and twenty years.²⁵

Greek influence over time infiltrated the life and soul of the Church and changed it into an institution which would have been totally foreign to the Apostles of Jesus Christ. The religious philosophy of Greece, which made its entrance into the Church at about the year 130, went straight to the centre of Christianity whose leaders welcomed and embraced it. The Greek spirit, absorbed with Greek philosophy and, particularly, of Platonism, became the platform of many of the religious doctrines of the Church.

By the fourth century, the Church was drenched in Hellenism. Greek ideas were for the most part adopted in full, except that they were labelled with a Christian name. In other words, the thing itself is taken over, and often without any alteration. In the worship of saints, we saw the rise of a Christian religion of a lower order. Paul, the Apostle for the gentiles, foresaw this when he explicitly warned the Colossians:

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (Col. 2:8 KJV)

PERSECUTIONS AGAINST CHRISTIANS ENDED

In 311 the Edict of Serdica also known as the Edict of Toleration by Galerius was issued. This Edict granted Christians the status of "religio"

licita" (approved religion), which officially ended the Diocletianic persecution of Christians in the East. Roundabout 312 Constantine the Great, Emperor of the Western Roman Empire (he later became emperor of both West and East), "converted" to Christianity.

Then, in 313 emperors Constantine in the West and Licinius in the East signed the Edict of Milan. This letter established a policy of religious freedom for all, pagans as well as Christians, and it officially brought an end to the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. The Edict also gave Christians freedom of worship, and it directed the governors to restore to them all their property which was confiscated during the persecution.

Constantine gave to Pope Miltiades or Melchiade the palace on Monte Celio which formerly belonged to the Laterani family. He raised the adjoining imperial horse-guards' barracks and commissioned the construction of the world's first Christian basilica on that site. Construction began between 318 and 322, and about 30 years later it was completed. Hereafter, the Lateran palace, known as the Patriarchate, was the pope's official residence until the fifteenth century.

REORGANISATION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

In 293 Emperor Diocletian divided the empire into two subdivisions, East and West. At the end of 312 Constantine the Great (306 to 337), successfully defeated Maxentius and in September of 324, he got rid of Licinius and thus became sole emperor of the Roman Empire. He set off to reorganise the affairs of the empire. Under his rule, the empire was to be governed by four vice-prefects placed under his command.

Constantine also decided that the Christian world would be governed from four great cities, Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Rome. Over each city was appointed a patriarch whose task it was to govern and control all the elders of the churches in his diocese. Constantine wanted the Christian church to be organised in a way similar to the government of the empire. Besides, the status of the city in effect determined the respect enjoyed by its patriarch.

Rome was regarded as the most powerful, influential and prestigious city of the world and as such it meant that the bishop of

Rome should be the most prominent and influential of the four patriarchs. History tells us that the honour and respect given to the bishop of Rome gradually grew and to such an extent that with the passing of the third and fourth centuries the bishops of Rome began to demand recognition for the exalted position they now considered to be their God-given right.

CONSTANTINE AND THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

At the beginning of the fourth century, the citizens of the once mighty Roman Empire were starting to feel the effect of the empire's decline. The once hated and persecuted Christian religion suddenly was known as the most popular religion of the Roman Empire. However, this new freedom and exalted status of the church had the effect that a variety of religious ideas were now freely and openly propagated and debated by bishops and religious leaders in true Greek fashion. Large cracks in the church began to show as opposing parties could not lay their differences aside for the sake of the unity of the church.

The main theological issue was, ironically, about Christ. The apostolic age had by then come to an end, and the inner guidance of God's Holy Spirit had to make way for carnal philosophical reasoning. Childlike faith in God the Father and Jesus, His Son, was replaced with all sorts of questions and answers on who is the Christ? Is He more divine than human or more human than divine? Was Jesus created or begotten? Being the Son of God, is He co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, or is He lower in status than the Father? Is the Father the one true God, or are the Father, Son, and Spirit the one true God? Are they three Gods in one God or maybe one God divided into three Persons, or What are they? What should we make of all the doctrines of the so-called fathers of the Church?

It is clear that all these questions were rooted in ungodly human philosophy – something that the apostle Paul warned against.

See to it that no one enslaves you through philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to the Messiah. (Col. 2:8 ISV)

Maybe the bickering bishops should have paid attention to Paul's message to the church in Corinth:

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.’ Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. (1 Cor. 1:18-25 NIV)

Did not Jesus say to His disciples: “Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1 ASV), or did he instruct them to consult the philosophers of Greece or the “theologians” of the School of Alexandria, to analyze and define the relationship between Him and His Father?

Constantine was worried that his rule would not be able to withstand the hard-fought divisions and many times disorderly arguing of doctrinal issues of the church. He was afraid that the quarrels within the church were not only a threat to Christianity, but also to the affairs of the empire. He wanted a single and unified religious force in his empire, and to accomplish that he called the first ecumenical council of the Christian church in 325 to be held in ancient Nicaea (now Iznik, Turkey).

Constantine, who was a new but unbaptised convert of the Christian faith, presided over the opening session of the Council and he even took part in the discussions of the council. However, not being a bishop of the church, he could not cast a vote on any of the issues discussed by the council.

Constantine had summoned these dignitaries to consolidate his own newly acquired political power as his recently procured imperial peace was being threatened by the real possibility of further conflict. At first, he wrote letters to the two main figures of the dispute, Alexander

and Arius. However, these letters, surprisingly, had no apparent effect. Eusebius records that,

it was too great a matter to be dealt with by the letter so that the ferocity of the quarrel increased.^{17a}

The fact that these letters, coming from an Emperor, could not calm the strife, may explain why Constantine wanted to get this growing unrest settled as quickly as possible.

Jacob Burckhardt suggested that Constantine was also moved to convene the council, not only to calm the destructive conflicts of the Christian Church but also because he saw the church as a ready vehicle through which he could further consolidate his own power.

*Constantine found the clergy already so suitably organized for power and so elevated by the persecution that he must either rule through this corporation and its high credit or acquire its irreconcilable enmity. He, therefore, gave the clergy every possible guarantee of favour, even as far as a sort of participation in rule, and in return the clergy were the most devoted agents for spreading his power, and completely ignored the fact that he still stood with one foot in paganism and that his hands were over and again stained with blood.*⁸

Apparently, Constantine, dressed in purple and gold, made an impressive ceremonial entrance at the opening of the Council, but he did respectfully seat the bishops ahead of himself. Eusebius (p. 125) said Constantine was,

like some heavenly angel of God, his bright mantle shedding lustre like beams of light, shining with the fiery radiance of a purple robe and decorated with the dazzling brilliance of gold and precious stones.^{17a}

Eusebius often displayed his hagiographic view of Constantine. Constantine intended to organise the Council along the lines of the Roman Senate. Whether Constantine had any idea or understanding of what the bishops were fighting about is hard to tell, but at least he enjoyed the attention he received from the bishops and they, in turn, marvelled at their new status in the empire. Pope Sylvester I of Rome did not attend the council but was represented by legates.

The main issue at the council was what became known as the Arian controversy, which basically boils down to the difference

between the views of Arius, a presbyter of the Church of Alexandria and those of the so-called Orthodox fathers of the Church concerning the relationship between God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct the complete doctrine of Arius since none of his original writings survived. After the Council of Nicaea, Emperor Constantine gave an order to destroy and burn all of his works and those that somehow did survive this purge were later destroyed by his Orthodox opponents. Those works which have survived Constantine's purge are quoted in the works of churchmen who denounced him as a "heretic". This led some scholars to question their reliability.

Another fact that is worth mentioning is that the term "Arianism" suggests that Arius was the originator of the teaching that bears his name. However, the debate over the Son's precise relationship to the Father did not begin with him. The subject was discussed decades before the Council of Nicaea, even before Arius's time. Arius merely intensified the controversy. Other "Arians" such as Eusebius of Nicomedia was much more influential in the long run.

Some later "Arians" claimed not to have been familiar with Arius or his specific teachings. However, because the conflict between Arius and his foes brought the issue to the theological forefront, the doctrine he proclaimed, although it did not originate with him, is generally labelled as "his".

After a long and bitter fight between the parties,

...the council condemned Arius and, with reluctance on the part of some, incorporated the non-scriptural word homoousios ("of one substance") into a creed (the Nicene Creed) to signify the absolute equality of the Son with the Father. The emperor then exiled Arius, an act that, while manifesting solidarity of church and state, underscored the importance of secular patronage in ecclesiastical affairs.^{16b}

Emperor Constantine ordered the works of Arius to be confiscated and consigned to the flames, while his supporters were labelled "enemies of Christianity". The Council, however, was not the end of the controversy, and it continued for a very long time in various parts of the empire. Most of the German tribes who invaded the Roman Empire

a few centuries later were Arians, and it took many years for the Roman Church to either change their views or wipe them out completely.

The Council in Nicaea did not address the questions regarding the Holy Spirit. It was largely left unaddressed until after the relationship between the Father and the Son was settled around A.D. 362. So, the doctrine of the Trinity, in a fully fledged form, was not formulated until the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 360. Gregory of Nyssa primarily crafted a final form of the doctrine in A.D. 381.

LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA.

What happened at Nicaea can be described as a very low but turning point in the history of Christianity. The Church was supposed to be the united body of Christ, but alas, the fourth century Church was at best only a tarnished and vague reflection of the institution founded by its Master on the Day of Pentecost. Simple life-giving faith in the risen Son of God had been replaced by pagan philosophy and the reason of man.

From Nicaea onwards, people who sought salvation were divided into two camps; those who fully agreed with some sort of Trinitarian dogma as opposed to those who had a different view on the relationship of the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. The first group received an automatic pass to enter through the pearly gates. The second group were labelled heretics and therefore enemies of the Church, which is the same as being an enemy of God.

About this Council, the historian Jacob Burckhardt wrote:

It is one of the most intolerable spectacles in all history to see the Church, barely saved from persecution...wholly consumed in strenuous conflict over the relations of the three Persons of the Trinity. Oriental rigidity and Greek sophistry, equally represented in the episcopal thrones, tormented themselves and the letter of Scripture to produce some symbol which would make the incomprehensible comprehensible and to give general validity to some expression of the idea. From homoousios and homoiusios ("equal" and "similar") the conflict proceeded through a hundred metamorphoses and several hundred years and split the Eastern Church into sects.... A host of other interests, in part very worldly, attached themselves to the conflict and were concealed in it, so that it assumes the aspect of a merely hypocritical

*pretext. For the sake of this quarrel, the Church made itself inwardly hollow; for the sake of orthodox dogma it suffered the inward man to be famished, and, itself demoralized, it completely forfeited its higher moral effect upon the individual.*⁸

Constantine's council was the beginning of a partnership or alliance between Church and State. It was also the event that laid the foundation on which the Church could build itself into a sovereign political power. The Church was able to keep Constantine's vision of the partnership between Church and Emperor alive for more than one thousand years.

Constantine and the Church tried to enforce peace by squashing diversity of opinion and insisting on a normative constitutional framework for the Christian Church which had the Roman sword as its guarantor. By labelling its opponents heretics followed by excommunication, the Church turned itself into a self-righteous, not to be criticised,

...whited sepulcher, which outwardly appears beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. (Matt. 23:27 ASV)

The Council set the “orthodox” Church on a course for state governance, which was fundamentally in conflict with both the doctrines and practice of the Christian religion for the first three-hundred years of its existence.

The Council made its decisions binding on the then growing and future domain of Christendom. The Creed, adopted at the Council, is a statement of doctrine that would be defended against all other Christian interpretations and beliefs. Going against it was an unforgivable sin to be severely punished.

As well, following Nicaea, the Roman Church canonized, for the first time, their accepted scriptural writings and ethical code of conduct. Contrary to the true followers of Jesus Christ in the early years of the Church, the bishops at Nicaea and other councils that followed its example was essentially making law (canons), statutes which were binding on all, and enforced by the State on behalf of the Church.

Here at the very beginning of the fusion of Church and State, laws on both spiritual and secular matters were made. These laws were not just for one geographic area or one nation of the empire, but instead, it

was written to control all the people of the empire, from East to West and North to South.

With Constantine present at the Council, the bishops framed their understanding of what they were doing in legal language, setting out their canons (laws) in a similar way to codified Roman law.

Constantine, whether he planned it or not, actually gave the Church its first taste of political power. For instance, he made the decisions of the bishops binding and no longer appealable to the pagan courts.⁸ Eusebius writes:

He also put his seal on the decrees of bishops made at synods so that it would not be lawful for the rulers of provinces to annul what they had approved, since the priests of God were superior to any magistrate.^{17b}

The fact that he put the bishops on an even footing with the pagan judges shows to what lengths the Church was being moulded into a secular, sovereign organisation.

Burckhardt (*ibid* p. 308) comments on this move by the Emperor and says:

What was he to do when, by the general tendency of the age, the Church had turned into the state under his hands and the state into the Church. (He continues saying): ...considered from a higher point of view, it may well be deplored that the gospel was made into law for those who did not believe in it, and specifically by a ruler (Constantine) who was not inwardly moved by the substance of the religion which he imposed upon others. 'Christianity grows alien to its essence when it is made into law for those born instead of for those reborn' (Zahn, Konstantin der Grosse und die Kirche.)⁸

Stead noted that:

*In a social organization, Christianity was powerfully influenced by the pagan Empire. The Church may in its earliest local phases have owed much to Greek and Roman collegia of various kinds, notably burial clubs, and also to the Jewish synagogue; but the chief formative attraction, whether consciously recognized or not, was Roman Imperialism.*⁵²

THE SEAT OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE MOVES TO

CONSTANTINOPLE

In 330 Constantine moved the seat of the Roman Empire from Rome to Constantinople (Byzantine). This act of Constantine enhanced the power of the Bishop of Rome tremendously. The void left by the Emperor's absence in Rome was filled by the bishop of Rome to whom the laypeople looked for guidance and security. The contest as to which was the greatest, which had been going on for some time between the bishops of the four great cities, was now, for the most part, confined to Rome and the new contender, Constantinople.

GERMANIC PEOPLES CONVERTED TO CHRISTIANITY

The Germanic peoples, traditionally pagans, gradually converted to Christianity by varying means, but many elements of their pre-Christian culture and indigenous beliefs remained firmly in place after their conversion. The Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals and other Germanic tribes were Christianized while they were still outside the bounds of the Roman Empire; however, when they entered the provinces of the Western Roman Empire and began founding their own kingdoms there, most of them were Arian Christians and accordingly labelled "heretics" by Rome.

THE RELIGION OF THE GERMANS

Much to the dismay of Rome's Catholics, most of the Germanic kingdoms adopted the Arian form of Christianity. It is a known fact that when the Germanic peoples entered the Roman Empire and founded successor-kingdoms in the western part, most had been Arian Christians for more than a century. The Franks and Anglo-Saxons were the notable exceptions, converting directly from paganism to Nicene Catholicism.

In all these cases the Germans embraced the Arian form of Christianity; none of the major Germanic people became officially Catholic until the conversion of the Franks under Clovis (496) and of the Burgundians under Sigismund. The reason for their adoption of Arianism rather than Catholicism is very obscure. Unhappily, the books produced by the

Arian Germans have all disappeared with the exception of the fragments of Ulfila's Bible, some leaves of an anonymous Gothic commentary on St. John's Gospel, and a fragment of a church calendar written in Gothic. It is clear, however, that their theology depended on a literal interpretation of the Scriptures.^{16c}

Foakes says:

From 476 to 521 the world was almost entirely under the sway of Arians. All the barbarians, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and Vandals professed Arianism. Not that they could appreciate the intricate subtleties of the Greek language or the technical terms which separated those who held the Creed of Nicaea from the followers of Arius, but because they had received their Christianity from Arian missionaries, and perhaps because they disdained to worship with the despised Roman provincials.²⁰

Of all the Germanic kingdoms, the Vandals, Heruli, and Ostrogoths posed the greatest hindrance for the development of the papacy. Their defeat allowed for unchallenged papal supremacy in 538. After that, all the Arian kingdoms were eventually forced to become Roman Catholic.

IMPORTANT IMPERIAL EDICTS

Although Constantine I adopted Christianity as the religion of the emperors, it took another sixty years for it to become the religion of the empire under the rule of Theodosius. However, the papacy's legal claims of primacy were not yet secured. Four separate imperial edicts, i.e., laws of the empire, by different emperors, were passed granting and affirming the increasing privileges, immunities and authorities of the bishop of Rome. As a result of these edicts, the bishop of Rome became the almost unchallenged head of all churches.

These four edicts are:

1. The edict of Theodosius I, Gratian and Valentinian II (378 or 379),
2. The edict of Theodosius II and Valentinian III (445),
3. The imperial letter of Justinian (533—becoming effective in 538),
4. The edict of Phocas (606).

THE EDICT OF GRATIAN AND VALENTINIAN II – EDICT OF THESSALONICA

When Theodosius I became Emperor, Arianism was widespread in the eastern half of the empire, while the west had remained steadfastly Nicene (Trinitarian). Theodosius himself was devoted to the Nicene version of Christianity. In the western part of the empire, his counterpart Gratian promoted the persecution of heretics, in other words, all those Christians who did not follow the religious doctrines of Rome. On February 27, 380 Theodosius I, Gratian, and Valentinian II jointly issued the Edict of Thessalonica. The English translation of the Edict reads as follows:

Emperors Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius Augusti. Edict to the people of Constantinople. It is our desire that all the various nations which are subject to our Clemency and Moderation, should continue to profess that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter, as it has been preserved by faithful tradition, and which is now professed by the Pontiff Damasus (Pope Damasus) and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness. According to the apostolic teaching and the doctrine of the Gospel, let us believe in the one deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a Holy Trinity. We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title of Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since, in our judgment, they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics and shall not presume to give to their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of the divine condemnation and in the second the punishment of our authority which in accordance with the will of Heaven we shall decide to inflict. Given in Thessalonica on the third day from the calends of March, during the fifth consulate of Gratian Augustus and first of Theodosius Augustus.¹¹

In effect, the Edict says, “If you do not want to be severely punished you have to be a Christian, but not just any Christian, you have to be the right kind of Christian, in other words, a Trinitarian Christian”. After the edict, Theodosius spent a great deal of energy trying to suppress all non-Nicene forms of Christianity, especially

Arianism, and in establishing Nicene orthodoxy throughout his realm. Starting from the issuance of this edict the Catholic Church, for more than a thousand two hundred years, legally controlled the minds and souls of all who wanted to be followers of Jesus Christ.

One can say that the birth of the Reformation, the end of the Middle Ages and the period of Enlightenment, marked the end of the Catholic Church's absolute control of the saints of God, although it still exercises its influence over millions of Christians whether Roman Catholic or non-Roman Catholic.

Since the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, starting at the Council of Nicaea, until this day we are living in, the body of Jesus Christ is torn in pieces. The Catholic Church and her daughters (churches that follow her creeds), still regard all who do not blindly and wholeheartedly believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, as sects or cults, in effect not really as Christians. All this because of a man-made doctrine riddled with illogical and unexplainable reason, birthed in Greek and ancient Eastern philosophies, when all we are in need of is to listen to Jesus who once said, "believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1).

This edict, in a limited way, recognised the primacy of Rome's bishop when it ruled that certain cases in the churches of the West should be referred or appealed to the pope and/or a council of bishops. This gave various bishops, scattered over the West, an opportunity to write to Rome's Bishop for a decision on controversial issues to which he answered by decretal letters (papal decrees) and ecclesiastical mandates and decisions.

The authority of the bishop of Rome was now greater than that implied in the sixth canon of the Council of Nicaea (325), which recognised the equal authority of the then-leading churches of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Ephesus. The edict added imperial recognition of the Petrine theory (Peter, the first pope according to Roman Catholic tradition), and on which the Roman bishops based their claim as judge of the Christian faith.

THE EDICT OF THEODOSIUS II AND VALENTINIAN III

Valentinian III, a western emperor from 425 until 455 was by most accounts a poor emperor. He faced pressure from the Gauls, Vandals and Huns. Rome itself fell in 476 when Odoacer deposed the last Roman

Emperor Romulus. Many of the emperors at the time left their day to day operations to others and so it is in this context that he most likely did not want to deal with church matters rather delegating that power to the bishop of Rome.

The following is an extract of his decree translated by J. H. Robinson:

Since, then, the primacy of the Apostolic See is established by the merit of St. Peter (who is the chief among the bishops), by the majesty of the city of Rome, and finally by the authority of a holy council, no one, without inexcusable presumption, may attempt anything against the authority of that see. Peace will be secured among the churches if everyone recognizes his ruler. [After a reference to the independent action of certain prelates of Gaul, the edict continues.] Lest even a slight commotion should arise in the churches, or the religious order be disturbed, we herewith permanently decree that not only the bishops of Gaul but those of the other provinces, shall attempt nothing counter to ancient custom without the authority of the venerable father [Papa] of the Eternal City. Whatever shall be sanctioned by the authority of the Apostolic See shall be a law to them, and to everyone else; so that if one of the bishops be summoned to the judgment of the Roman bishop and shall neglect to appear, he shall be forced by the moderator of his province to present himself. In all respects let the privileges be maintained which our deified predecessors have conferred upon the Roman church.⁴⁹

THE IMPERIAL LETTER OF JUSTINIAN, IN 533 — BECOMING EFFECTIVE IN 538

Justinian I (527-565) is regarded as the greatest of all the rulers of the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. He conquered a number of the Germanic nations who being overpowered by his sword, renounced Arianism in favour of the Catholic Church's doctrine. This added to the power of the bishop of Rome as they automatically became subjects under his authority. Justinian was known for his regulation of ecclesiastical and theological matters of which the most important was his imperial Decretal Letter which declared the bishop of Rome the

“Head of all the holy churches.” This document laid the legal foundation for papal ecclesiastical supremacy.

Justinian's Code incorporated edicts of former emperors in favour of the Roman church, and in the celebrated Novellae, or new laws, the canons of the former Church councils are turned into standing laws for the whole empire. For instance, the law of Constantine, Constantius, and Constans, which stated:

Privileges granted in consideration of religion should only benefit those who observe the rules of the Catholic Faith.

Then there is the more severe law of the year 396 given by the emperors Arcadius and Honorius, which stated:

Let all heretics know positively that their places of assembly shall be taken from them, whether these are designated under the name of churches, or are called diaconates, or deaneries, or whether meetings of this kind are held in private houses; for all such private places or buildings shall be claimed by the Catholic Church.

In his Code, he decreed that:

Anyone holding “unauthorized” church services in a private house could lose his property and be expelled from the province, and further that no “heretic” should have the right to acquire land, upon pain of confiscation of his property, and without hope of restoration.³²

THE EDICT OF PHOCAS (606)

Phocas merely reiterated and confirmed the Roman bishop's pre-eminence over the rival bishop of Constantinople. But Phocas' reign and authority were confined to the affairs of the East, rather than that of the West.

THE SECOND ECUMENICAL COUNCIL AT CONSTANTINOPLE (381)

This council was summoned by Emperor Theodosius I and the meeting took place in Constantinople. The doctrine adopted by this council became known to the church as the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed

(commonly referred to as the Nicene Creed). In effect, it affirmed and developed the creed earlier promulgated at the Council of Nicaea in 325 (Creed of Nicaea). The Council finalised the Trinitarian doctrine of the equality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son. Canon 3 of the Council also decreed that:

The Bishop of Constantinople shall hold the first rank after the Bishop of Rome.

THE COUNCIL OF EPHESUS (431)

Emperor Theodosius II convened this, the third ecumenical council in 431. The Council was attended by a group of bishops who represented all of Christendom. The main theme of the debate was to settle the dispute between two theological factions, which differed in their Christology.

Since the third century, the title Theotokos (Greek: Θεοτόκος, "God-bearer" or "Birth-giver of God") was given to the Virgin Mary and used by men such as Origen, Athanasius, and Gregory of Nazianzus. Nestorius rejected the title, Theotokos, for the Virgin Mary because he reasoned, God as an eternal being could not have been born. He believed that the Virgin Mary should be called Christotokos, Greek for "Birth-Giver of Christ". Cyril, his most forceful opponent, argued that Nestorius split Jesus in half and denied that he was both human and divine.

In simple language, the question would be if Jesus was a combination of two persons (God and Man) or whether Jesus was one person with two natures, the so-called God-man. A closer look at both men's theories (since that is all it is; man-made theories and speculation) reveals the absurdity of their philosophical reasoning. The mere fact that such carnal reasoning was elevated to rather such an extent that it, requiring the intervention of an ecumenical council to settle the dispute, is proof enough of how low the church had sunk compared to that day when God had poured out His Holy Spirit upon the congregation in the Upper Room in Jerusalem.

Cyril appealed to Pope Celestine I, charging Nestorius with heresy. The pope agreed and gave Cyril his authority to serve a notice to this effect to Nestorius, to recant his views within ten days or face

excommunication. The Council confirmed the original Nicene Creed and condemned the teachings of Nestorius as heresy.

Also at this Council the legate of Pope Celestine publicly proclaimed before all Christendom:

There is no doubt, and it is noted by everybody, that the holy and most blessed Peter is the leader and head of the apostles, a pillar of the faith, and the foundation of the Catholic Church, and that he received from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the human race, the keys of rulership with which power is given to absolve and to bind sins; who [Peter] till our time and forever lives and exercises judgment in his successors.

Froom,^[22] says that Pope Leo (440 – 461),

*saw the power implied by this claim, and entrenched himself behind it. He first outlined clearly the extreme limits of the claims of the medieval Papacy to the universal rule of the church. Thus, the church of Rome moved on toward the **spiritual dictatorship of Christendom**. More, perhaps, than any other, Leo laid the early foundations of that imposing edifice that towered among the nations for more than a thousand years, when papal bulls instead of imperial decrees began to rule the world.*

By the end of the fifth century the early ministers of the church who taught the Word of God, were replaced by a priesthood in which the priest acted as the mediator between man and God. Where once the church was the fellowship of believers under Christ Jesus, and directed by the indwelling Spirit of God, it now became an institution dominated by a hierarchy of bishops and elders.

Leo (440 – 461), the bishop of Rome, claimed the position of the sovereign over the Western Church.

Leo began to feel that the time had come to materialize the claims of Augustine regarding the temporal millennial kingdom of Christ and with his avowed vested powers of loosing and binding openly to declare his right to the vacant throne as the fitting seat of Christ's universal kingdom. In this way, the Roman church pushed its way into the place of the Western empire, of which it is 'the actual continuation.' Thus, the empire did not perish; it only changed its form. The Pope became Caesar's successor. This was a long stride forward. Ibit. p. 497-498.

THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON (451)

At this, the fourth ecumenical council, the Chalcedonian Creed was issued, which re-asserted Jesus as True God and True Man and the dogma of the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God. The council excommunicated Eutyches, leading to the schism with Oriental Orthodoxy.

POPE SUPERIOR TO EMPEROR

In 495 Pope Gelasius claimed that his authority was superior to that of Emperor Anastasius and in 496 the pagan king of the Franks, Clovis I, converted to the Catholic faith.

END OF THE KINGDOM OF THE VANDALS

At the Battle of Tricamarum in 533, Justinian's general Belisarius defeated the Vandal king, Gelimer, and in so doing **ended** the kingdom of the Vandals.

BARBARIAN INVASIONS

Another thing that helped to build the whole structure of papal Rome was the barbarian invasions of the Western Roman Empire. One of these barbarian kingdoms was the Franks. Their king, Clovis, was the first of the barbarian princes to accept the faith proposed by the Church of Rome. Apparently, he made a vow to become a Christian if the Christians God would help him to defeat the Alemanni in battle.

The Alemanni were indeed defeated, and Clovis was baptized in 496 in the Cathedral of Rheims. The bishop of Rome gave him the title of "*eldest son of the Church*." In the sixth century, the Burgundians of Southern Gaul, the Visigoths of Spain, the Suevi of Portugal and the Anglo-Saxons of Britain, all joined the religion of the bishop of Rome, that is, they adopted the doctrines of Rome and accepted the theology of the Council of Nicaea.

All of these "conversions" strengthened the power of the bishop of Rome. With all this support the bishops of Rome now played their role

as rightful heirs to the Caesars, and the city, that had once been the seat of power for the Roman Empire, became the place where the bishop of Rome exercised his authority as more and more nations accepted his position.

UNIVERSAL BISHOP

The Roman Empire continued to crumble. Emperor Phocas (602 to 610) reigned in Constantinople and Boniface III (became pope in 607), who was a legate to Phocas before he became pope, showed great skill in obtaining more official recognition from the Emperor.

As previously said, Boniface obtained a decree from Phocas which restated that “the See of Blessed Peter the Apostle should be head of all the Churches”. The title of “Universal Bishop” now belonged exclusively to the bishop of Rome, and in effect, it ended the attempt of Cyriacus, the bishop of Constantinople, to establish himself as “Universal Bishop”.

Boniface made excellent use of the assumption that Peter was the first bishop of Rome, and his new title of “Universal Bishop,” gave him authority and power to reign as supreme head of the church, from the central city of Rome to the utmost reaches of the empire.

DONATION OF CONSTANTINE

Round about the middle of the eighth century a document, known as the Donation of Constantine, suddenly surfaced in Rome.⁴⁶ This document laid claim to have been a Roman imperial decree by which Emperor Constantine I, had supposedly transferred authority over Rome and the western part of the Roman Empire to Sylvester, the bishop of Rome (314 – 335).

The following is a quotation from the manuscript:

We attribute to the See of Peter all the dignity, all the glory, all the authority of the imperial power. Furthermore, we give to Sylvester and to his successors our palace of the Lateran, which is incontestably the finest palace on the earth; we give him our crown, our mitre, our diadem, and all our imperial vestments; we transfer to him the imperial dignity. We bestow on the holy Pontiff in free gift the city of Rome, and all the western cities of Italy. To cede precedence to him, we

divest ourselves of our authority over all those provinces, and we withdraw from Rome, transferring the seat of our empire to Byzantium; inasmuch as it is not proper that an earthly emperor should preserve the least authority, where God hath established the head of his religion.²¹

This document was most likely forged a little before 754 and it was also in the eighth century that the papacy came within reach of gaining temporal power.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PAPAL STATES

In 751 the Lombards, who were supporters of Arianism, extinguished the Exarchate of Ravenna and turned their attention to the Duchy of Rome. To make things even worse for Rome, the Muslims at the same time had overrun Africa, conquered parts of Spain, and were also endangering Rome. When Constantinople was not able to come to the aid of Rome, Pope Stephen II turned his attention to the new king of the Franks, Pepin the Short, who had deposed the last Merovingian king in 750. Pope Stephan crossed the Alps and in January 754 Pepin welcomed him to the Carolingian royal palace at Ponthion where the pope remained throughout the winter.

Pepin was the son of Charles Martel and the father of the legendary Charlemagne. He needed approval for his new position, and the pope's request for help came just at the right time. Pepin made a promise to grant the pope rights over large territories in central Italy, an act commonly referred to as the Donation of Pepin.

Pope Stephen subsequently crowned Pepin in Paris as king of the Franks in a lavish ceremony at the Basilica of St Denis. This was the first recorded crowning of a civil ruler by a pope. He also gave Pepin the title of "Patrician of the Romans". Stephen strengthened his alliance with Pepin when he anointed Pepin and his sons, Charlemagne and Carloman, who were twelve and three years old respectively.

In 755 Pepin crossed the Alps with an army and defeated Aistulf, the king of the Lombards in 756. Under Pepin's direction, the keys to a number of cities and territories in central Italy that had submitted to papal authority were collected. The keys and a list of the cities involved, together with the Confession of St. Peter, were placed on the altar of Old

St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. (The so-called Confession of St. Peter is Rome's interpretation that Jesus's words, "upon this rock I will build my church" is the foundation of the doctrine of the papacy, whereby Christ's Church is built upon Peter and his successors, the Bishops of Rome).

Much of what Pepin granted to the pope had been imperial territory, to which the king had no legal claim. Papal accounts of the promise maintain that Pepin granted the pope the exarchate, including Ravenna, and the Roman duchy. Pepin's donation to the pope was an important step in the development of the Papal States helping to solidify the alliance between the papacy and the Frankish monarchy.

The Donation of Pepin, which was later offered as "proof" of the authenticity of the Donation of Constantine, was confirmed by Pepin's successors, Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, in 778 and 817 respectively.

The Lombards made a second attempt to besiege Rome and Pope Leo III again called on France for help. This time Charlemagne answered the call and defeated the Lombards. He confirmed what his father gave to the Church of Rome, but he enlarged the number of cities and lands given to the Church.

END OF THE KINGDOM OF THE LOMBARDS

The last king of the Lombards, Desiderius, succeeded in taking Rome and driving the Byzantines from Italy. However, when he threatened the papacy, Pope Adrian I reached out to Pepin's son, Charlemagne. Charlemagne answered the call, breaking the Frankish-Lombard alliance, and defeated Desiderius on the battlefield in 774. Charlemagne seized the lands of the Lombards and became "by God's Grace king of the Lombards as well as the Franks", as a contemporary document record.

This was also the end of the Lombards. Some territories under surviving Lombard dukes remained, but there was no longer a central Lombard government, and the people, with their culture, were absorbed into the kingdom of the Franks.

The close association between the papacy and the Frankish monarchy became even stronger when Charlemagne paid a visit to Rome in 800. On Christmas Day of this year Pope Leo III crowned him

"Holy Roman Emperor and Caesar of the Romans". This act in no uncertain terms exhibited the pope's increasing power.

In 538, Emperor Justinian bestowed upon the bishop of Rome the title of Pontifex Maximus (Greatest Priest). Two hundred sixty-two years later, it was the pope who then crowned the emperor.

THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

The coronation of Charlemagne undoubtedly defined a new phase in the Church's vision for Europe. The land of Charlemagne became known as the Holy Roman Empire. Its state, the Carolingian Empire under Charlemagne and his successors, was seen by the Church as the renewed Roman Empire. Its function was to defend and advance Christianity and the Church, using the power of the state, just like the late Roman Empire did. In the Carolingian state, Church and state were more closely woven than ever before. The Church was absolutely essential to the administration of Charlemagne's kingdom, and it formed an integral part of its structure.

THE CHURCH'S AUTHORITY

From this point on, the Church really began to see itself as the creator and authority over and behind "the nations" - the tribes, peoples and kingdoms of Western Europe. This was what it always wanted: the kings and peoples of Europe united and controlled by the Church under its sole guidance.

The fraudulent "Donation of Constantine," less than fifty years old, was already proving to be one of a number of very useful tools. Pope Nicholas I in 865 drew from this and other forgeries a way to demand submission from bishops and princes in order to accumulate massive riches to the papacy.

For Nicholas, the Roman see, having power by divine commission, was the head and the epitome of the Catholic church. Consistently urging the supremacy of Rome, he fully endorsed the papal inheritance of sacerdotal and royal functions as conferred by Christ on St. Peter and the delegation of temporal power to the emperor for the protection of the church. He reacted against Carolingian domination in

ecclesiastical matters and claimed the right to legislate for the whole of Christendom. Thus, his teaching contained the rudiments of papal theocracy and helped to found Roman supremacy over the Western sees by declaring that all must observe what the pope decides.^{16d}

THE PAPACY IN CHAOS

The arrogance of the popes grew from this time onward, as did their treasury. Popes became intoxicated with their own pride, some in their teens and twenties, losing their senses in wicked practices.

For instance, the infamous women, Theodora and Marozia, for many years governed the papal throne. They installed and expelled their lovers, sons, and grandsons as so-called masters of the Church. During her lifetime Marozia was the lover of one pope, mother to another, and grandmother to a third and she not only ruled over Rome but over the papacy as well.

For two centuries, the papacy was in chaos as the most powerful families of Italy disputed and fought over it like a possession. As Wylie recounts,

The candidate who was rich enough to offer the largest bribe, or powerful enough to appear with an army at the gates of Rome, was invariably crowned emperor in the Vatican.... The popes did not trouble the world with any formal statement of their principles on the head of the supremacy; they were content to embody them in acts. They were wise enough to know that the speediest way of getting the world to acknowledge theoretic truth is to familiarize it with its practical applications—to ask approval of it, not as a theory, but as a fact. Thus, the Popes, by a bold course of dexterous management, and of audacious but successful aggression, laboured to weave the doctrine of the supremacy into the general policy of Europe.^{66a}

CAROLINGIAN EMPIRE'S END

By the end of the ninth century the once powerful Carolingian Empire had broken up into smaller, unstable kingdoms, and to make things worse, they had to face aggressive attacks from the Vikings, the Magyars and from Muslim pirates. In contrast to the time when much

of Europe was under the rule of Charlemagne, it was now being led by weak men who constantly had to fight off rivals.

CADAVER SYNOD

In Rome, where the popes ruled, this decline was also in full swing. It was probably the darkest time in the history of the papacy.

In 891 Formosus became pope, but he died not long after in 896. He was succeeded by Pope Boniface VI, but after a pontificate of fifteen days, he is said by some to have died of gout, but by others to have been forcibly ejected to make way for Stephen VI (VII), the candidate of the Spoletan party.

At a Roman synod (popularly called the “Cadaver Synod”) conducted by Pope Stephen, Formosus’s political enemies had his corpse exhumed. The corpse was dressed up in full papal vestments, propped up on a throne, and subjected to a mock trial. A deacon was appointed to answer for the corpse. The verdict was that Formosus had been unworthy of the pontificate.

All the measures he took, the acts he performed and the orders he conferred were annulled and declared invalid. The papal vestments were torn from his body, three of the fingers on his right hand that he had used in consecrations were cut off and the corpse was thrown into the Tiber (later retrieved by a monk).

Not long after the trial of Formosus, Stephen died and over the next fifty years, sixteen popes were crowned of which it is either known or suspected that fifteen of them were murdered. The Papal throne was in the hands of the local political players of Rome, who were often ready to do just about anything to have their own candidate elected to the papal throne.

BENEDICT VI MURDERED

In 973, Emperor Otto I died. Pope Benedict VI was imprisoned in June 974 and Ferrucci was crowned as Pope Boniface VII. When Otto II demanded the release of Benedict VI, Boniface VII, who was unwilling to step down, apparently ordered a priest named Stephen to murder Benedict VI and while detained in prison he was strangled to death.⁴⁰

THE FIRST GERMAN POPE

In 996, Pope John XV called on Otto III for help in putting down a rebellion led by the Roman noble Crescentius II. However, before Otto could reach Rome, John XV died. Otto III then secured the election of his 23-year-old cousin, Bruno of Carinthia, as Pope Gregory V, the first ever German pope. On May 21, 996, Gregory V crowned Otto the Roman Emperor.

After Otto's return to Germany Pope Gregory V was driven from Rome by Crescentius, who then installed John XVI as the pope. The Emperor marched back into Italy in late 997 taking Rome in February 998. Otto ordered the execution of Crescentius, dethroned John XVI, and reinstated Gregory V as the pope.

HERETICS BURNED

In 1022, a number of heretics were burned at the stake in Orleans. This was the first burning of heretics in Western Europe since the fourth century.

CORRUPTION

In 1032, Pope Benedict IX was crowned pope for the first time. He was the nephew of two previous popes, Benedict VIII and John XIX. While still a youth, he was thrust into the papacy by the Tusculani family. He was three times elected as pope, from 1032 to 1044, from April to May 1045, and again from 1047 to 1048. He is mostly known for selling the papacy and then reclaiming the office twice.

His violent and corrupt conduct provoked the Romans to revolt against him, forcing him to flee from Rome. Sylvester III was elected to succeed him, but he too was quickly driven out by Benedict's brothers.

Benedict IX was again restored in April 1045 to his former papal position. However, one month later he resigned and sold the papacy to his godfather, Giovanni Graziano who offered him a pension. Graziano then became pope serving as Gregory VI.

However, in the following year, both Benedict IX and Sylvester III returned to Rome, each laying claim to the papal throne desiring Gregory VI to step down. King Henry of the Germans, however,

intervened, and at the Council of Sutri in December 1046, Benedict IX and Sylvester III were dismissed. Gregory VI was encouraged to resign as the arrangement between him and Benedict IX was considered to be simoniacal (paid for) and Clement II became pope in his stead.

CHURCH SPLIT

In 1054, the Greek churches in southern Italy were forced either to close or to conform to Latin practices, sparking a bitter dispute between the East and West Church. Consequently, the Church split along doctrinal, theological, linguistic, political, and geographical lines, and the fundamental breach never to be healed again, each side tending to accuse the other of heresy which had caused a division between the two.

PAPAL ELECTION DECREE

In 1059, a Papal Election Decree issued by the Roman Synod, under the presidency of Pope Nicholas II, ruled that popes should be elected by cardinals and interference from the Roman nobility or the Holy Roman emperor would be forbidden.

TURNING POINT

The year 1073 marks a turning point in the history of the papacy. From centuries of gross liberty and immorality, the papacy turned into a rigorous and harsh order of discipline. The papal minds used their energy to enhance their lust for total dominance of both ecclesiastical and temporal affairs. On the other hand, the successors of Charlemagne increased in weakness and to the point where they could no longer keep vain papal ambitions in check. At this point in time, Pope Gregory VII, also known as Hildebrand, entered the scene, having had been more ambitious than anyone of his predecessors.

When this pope stepped into office, a number of overwhelming challenges confronted him compelling him to straightaway deal with scandalous corruption then in sway among the clergy, along with the schism that had occurred between the churches of Rome and Constantinople. There was also the unavoidable struggle against civil

rulers who were bent on exerting their right to choose the Church's clergy, also control of its properties.

In March of 1074, Gregory promoted a sweeping set of reforming decrees, and, against widespread opposition, Gregory insisted that he must be obeyed. He believed that the slightest disobedience against his order was literally heretical, and it was then something that had to be punished harshly. To enforce his reforms, he even called on the people to rebel against bishops who disobeyed his orders.

Gregory was convinced that the papal reign was, in fact, the reign of God on earth. He was, therefore, determined to subject all authority and power, both spiritual and temporal, to the "chair of Peter." This pope visualised what was to become the vast structure of the papacy, and he therefore wanted the pope to be the supreme ruler and judge of all leaders of the Church as well as of the State. Consequently, obedience to papal legislation became a barometer for orthodoxy under Gregory VII, and the achievements of the Gregorian Reform paved the way for the papal monarchy of the 13th century. Wylie says:

Gregory rekindled, with all the ardour and vehemence characteristic of the man, the war between the throne and the mitre. The object at which Gregory VII aimed was twofold: 1. To render the election to the pontifical chair independent of the emperors; and, 2. To resume the empire as a fief of the Church, and to establish his dominion over the kings and kingdoms of the earth. His first step towards the accomplishment of these vast designs was...to enact clerical celibacy. His second was to forbid all ecclesiastics to receive investiture at the hands of the secular power.^{66b}

In 1075, Gregory VII issued his *Dictatus Papae*. It was his attempt to proclaim the universal jurisdiction of the bishops of Rome over the whole church, whether West or East.

*The famous *Dictatus papae* ("Dictates of the pope"), consists of 27 brief and pointed declarations that extol papal primacy and even includes the radical claim that the pope had the right to depose emperors. Scholars agree that Gregory was the author of these assertions and that the *Dictatus* strikingly reveals his unflinching vision of papal primacy, even though the sources and purpose of the *Dictatus* are still in dispute.^{16e}*

Declarations 7 to 10, 19, 22 and 26 of the Dictatus Papae²⁶ reads as follows:

7. *For him alone (the pope) is it lawful, according to the needs of the time, to make new laws, to assemble together new congregations, to make an abbey of a canonry, and, on the other hand, to divide a rich bishopric and unite the poor ones.*
8. *He alone (the pope) may use the Imperial Insignia.*
9. *All princes shall kiss the feet of the Pope alone.*
10. *His name alone (the pope's) shall be spoken in the churches.*
19. *He himself (the pope) may be judged by no one.*
22. *The Roman Church has never erred. Nor will it err, to all eternity-- Scripture being the witness.*
26. *He who is not at peace with the Roman Church shall not be considered 'Catholic'.*

The total supremacy of the pope was not won in a day, however, it was Gregory's intelligent grasp of the concept and his crushing ambition, coupled with the enormous wealth that the Roman Catholic Church accumulated, which made its implementation possible. These shrewd enactments began to bear fruit even during Gregory's rule from 1073-1085.

HENRY IV EXCOMMUNICATED

In 1076, Henry IV refused Gregory's demand to abandon the habit of "lay investiture", i.e., the emperor appointing the bishops. Gregory subsequently excommunicated and deposed Henry IV. In 1077, Henry IV became penitent and, after standing barefoot in the snow outside the residence of the pope in Canossa in northern Italy, Gregory VII pardoned him. Eight years later, in 1085, Henry took his revenge. He invaded Italy, drove the pope out of Rome causing Gregory VII to die in exile.

THE PAPACY'S INCREASE IN POWER

The pontiffs who succeeded Gregory VII developed the structures he had established. They continued his projects, striving through deceit, organized crusades, planned interdicts, and so forth, to bring the world under papal control. For two centuries since the time of Gregory VII's reign, the papacy increased in power and glory however, always at the expense of thousands of destroyed lives, many deposed kings and princes, numerous ruined cities, and countless ruined homesteads and farms, done in the name of the religion of Rome.

PAPAL DECREE AGAINST HERETICS

In 1184, Pope Lucius III issued "Ad Abolendam", the first papal decree against heretics. Among the "heretic" sects mentioned were the Cathars, Humiliati, Waldensians, Arnoldists, and Josephines. If heretics could not prove their innocence, which was almost impossible to do, they had to be handed over to the authorities for punishment. All those who supported heretical ideas or doctrines were deprived of legal or civil rights such as the right to hold public office, the right to a trial, the right to draft a will, and the inheritance of their fiefs and offices.

VICAR OF CHRIST

Popes Innocent III (1198-1216) and Boniface VIII (1294-1303) put the final touches to the papal triumph of spiritual and temporal power, the former regarded by many historians as one of the most powerful and influential popes of the medieval period and during his reign, the papacy reached the height of its power. He exercised a deep and wide influence over the Christian states of Europe, claiming supremacy over all of Europe's princes and kings. By means of his decretals (letters) and the Fourth Lateran Council, he reformed the Roman Curia (administrative apparatus of the Roman Catholic Church) which resulted in a considerable refinement of Western canon law. In his arrogant inaugural speech, Innocent said:

...the successor of St. Peter is the Vicar of Christ; he has been established as mediator between God and man, below God but beyond man; less

*than God but more than man; who shall judge all and be judged by no one.*¹⁰

In this statement, Innocent elevated the papacy to a position where the pope literally replaced Jesus Christ as the only mediator between the Most-High God and man. Jesus said:

I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6 KJV)

The apostle Paul testifies to Timothy:

For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Tim. 2:5 NIV)

Innocent believed that the spiritual ruler of the Church was supreme over all temporal powers. For example, in his letter to King John Lackland of England, he writes,

*Jesus Christ wills that the kingdom should be priestly, and the priesthood kingly. Over all, he has set me as his vicar upon earth, so that, as before Jesus 'every knee shall bow,' in like manner to his vicar all shall be obedient, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. Pondering this truth, thou, as a secular prince, has subjected thy realm to Him to whom all is spiritually subject.*¹⁰

Pope Innocent III established and controlled a much larger papal territory (Papal States) than any of his predecessors, and, from his pontificate onwards, the pope functioned as an important secular prince/king in central Italy. He wrote many sermons, of which many paid tributes to the feast day of his consecration, on which he presented his vision of the papal office and the pope's role in Christendom.

He explained the supremacy of papal authority over the royal power of princes and kings, by saying that, just as the moon received its splendour from the sun, royal power acquired its greatness and dignity from papal authority. The pope,

has the authority because he does not exercise the office of man, but of the true God on earth.

He was known for using interdict and other abusive tactics to force princes and kings to obey his decisions. (An interdict is an ecclesiastical

condemnation or ban that disallows a church member or a group from participating in the Church's rites and rituals).

MORE OF INNOCENT III

On July 3, 1201, Innocent III approved Otto IV as the new Roman king and declared that anyone who refuses to acknowledge Otto IV will be excommunicated. At the same time, he encouraged the cities in Tuscany to stand up against German imperial interests in Italy and to place themselves under his protection, which they subsequently did.

In May 1202, Innocent III issued a decree, the "Venerabilem", in which he explained the roles of the empire in relation to the papacy. It decreed that the German princes had the right to elect the king/emperor, however, the pope had the right to decide if the elected king was worthy of imperial dignity or not. If he was found worthy the pope would anoint, consecrate and crown him. However, if the pope decided that the elected king was unworthy, the princes must elect a new king. Should they refuse, the pope will make the choice for them.

Apart from the fact that Innocent III played important roles in the politics of Norway, France, Sweden, Bulgaria, Spain and England, he was also a vehement opponent of religious dissent, which he perceived as heresy.

In 1199 he decreed that, because heretics are traitors to God, they should be punished in the same way traitors to the state are punished. He wanted to eradicate as much of heresy as possible.

In 1208, he launched crusades against the Albigensians, also known as the Cathars. The Crusades ended in 1244 with the fall of the Château of Montségur, although Cathars were still burned alive until the fourteenth century.

ALBIGENSIAN REVOLT AGAINST THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Albigensians became widespread in southwestern France, operating under the control of local princes such as the Count of Toulouse. They rejected the authority of the Catholic Church as well as, what they believed to be, corrupt teachings of the Church.

In the eyes of the Catholic Church, they were a heretical sect of the worst kind. Innocent III initially tried to "peacefully" reform them

when, in 1198, he sent a monk named Rainier to visit France empowering him to excommunicate those who refused to repent from their heretical ideas and practises. Rainier also conveyed Innocent's orders to local temporal authorities namely, to confiscate the lands of the heretics.

Surprisingly the Albigensians did not follow the pope's orders. During the turmoil, one of Innocent's legates, Pierre de Castelnau, was killed by an unknown assailant. Innocent was furious, and he changed his method from word to weapon. He called upon King Philip II of France to suppress the Albigenses. Being obedient, Philip ordered Simon de Montfort to launch a campaign against the heretics.

According to the New World Encyclopedia's article on the Albigensian Crusade it is estimated to have killed 1 million people, not only Cathars but a significant portion of the general population of southern France.

Raphael Lemkin,³⁵ who in the 20th century coined the word "genocide", referred to the Albigensian Crusade as "one of the most conclusive cases of genocide in religious history".

TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE BANNED

In 1229 the Council of Toulouse forbade the laity to read vernacular translations of the Bible. Canon 14:

We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old and the New Testament; unless anyone from the motives of devotion should wish to have the Psalter or the Breviary for divine offices or the hours of the blessed Virgin; but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books.⁴⁴

THE PAPAL INQUISITION

In 1231, Pope Gregory IX initiated the Papal Inquisition, a mechanism that severely punished and executed people accused of heresy. Gregory IX appointed several Papal Inquisitors (Inquisitores haereticae pravitatis), mostly Dominicans and Franciscans, for the various regions of Europe.

This was an extremely horrific time (1226 to 1244) in the history of man. The Inquisition's tribunals were essentially based on terror and public condemnation. Normal criminal proceedings were not followed. The Inquisition used horrific methods of torture as a lawful procedure to persuade the accused to confess wrongdoings and/or to confiscate their goods and property. Believers who recanted to avoid being burned at the stake had to wear a shameful yellow cross on the back and front of their robes.

CATHARS BURNED ALIVE

In 1244 the Château de Montségur, the last stronghold of the Cathars fell after a siege that lasted ten months. When the castle surrendered about 210 Cathar leaders and unrepentant believers were burned alive.

UNAM SANCTAM

In November of 1302, Pope Boniface VIII issued his Papal bull "Unam sanctam," in response to, what Boniface perceived as the intolerable arrogance of King Philip of France. Unam Sanctum was probably the most famous papal document of the Middle Ages. In it, the pope affirmed his authority as the heir of Peter and Vicar of Christ over all human authorities, spiritual and temporal.

Therefore, both are in the power of the Church, namely, the spiritual sword and the temporal sword; the latter is to be used for the Church, the former by the Church; the former by the hand of the priest, the latter by the hand of princes and kings, but at the nod and sufferance of the priest. The one sword must of necessity be subject to the other, and the temporal authority to the spiritual.³⁹

Spiritual power, according to Boniface, rests in the hands of the Church. Temporal power is in the hands of kings and soldiers, but it is to be exercised only as the Church permits because things spiritual are superior to things temporal.

Furthermore, that every human creature is subject to the Roman pontiff - this we declare, say, define, and pronounce to be altogether necessary to salvation.

PAPAL HEADQUARTERS MOVED TO AVIGNON

The conflict between the French king, Philip IV, and the papacy culminated in the death of Pope Boniface VIII after Philip had arrested and maltreated him. In his place, Boccasini was elected as Pope Benedict XI on October 22, 1303. About nine months later he died, and King Philip forced a deadlocked conclave to elect Clement V, a Frenchman, as pope in 1305. Clement refused to go to Rome moving his court instead to the papal enclave in Avignon, where it remained for the next sixty-seven years under the influence of the French Crown. A total of seven popes, all French, reigned in Avignon.

ORDER OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR ABOLISHED

In 1312 Pope Clement V abolished the order of the Knights Templar. In October of 1307, hundreds of Knights Templar were arrested in France. Philip IV was the force behind this move. He charged the Templars with usury, credit inflation, fraud, heresy, sodomy, immorality and abuses. Clement V was worried that the French State would proceed to judge the Templars without waiting for the Church to do its part in the proceedings. To please the king's wishes Clement V summoned the Council of Vienne in 1311, but the Council refused to convict the Templars of heresy. Clement V went along and abolished the Order of the Knights Templar. Apparently, they have outlived their usefulness as papal bankers and protectors of pilgrims in the East. In 1314 Jacques de Molay, the grand master of the Templars, was burned at the stake in Paris.

BACK TO ROME

In 1377 Pope Gregory XI moved the papacy back to Rome from Avignon.

THE WESTERN SCHISM

In 1378 the election of Pope Urban VI and his bitter fight against corruption, sparked the Western Schism. A number of French cardinals,

who left Rome, declared Urban's election null and void. They then elected a French cardinal as pope (antipope) Clement VII, in Avignon.

This was the beginning of the Western Schism that plagued the Roman Church from 1378 until 1410. During this period two, and sometimes even three, men simultaneously claimed to be the real pope, having excommunicated each other. The schism of the three popes, Gregory XII, Benedict XIII and John XXIII was ended by the Council of Constance (1414 – 1418).

JOHANNUS HUSS BURNED

In 1415 Johannus Huss was burned at the stake at Constance for heresy against the doctrines of the Church and in 1440 Johannes Gutenberg completes his wooden printing press in which he used moveable metal type. Its cheaper and faster means of reproduction of printed books or manuscripts revolutionised the spread of knowledge. Soon after its invention, the world saw a large-scale production of religious books including Bibles.

CONSTANTINOPLE CONQUERED

On May 29, 1453, Constantinople (and therefore the Eastern Church) falls prey to the Ottoman Empire, who changed its name to Istanbul.

ROMANUS PONTIFEX

On January 8, 1455, Pope Nicholas V issued a papal bull, *Romanus Pontifex*, conferring on the Crown of Portugal dominion over all lands discovered or conquered during the Age of Discovery. This bull is an important example of the papacy's claim to spiritual lordship of the whole world and of its role in regulating relations among Christian princes, Christians and "unbelievers" ("heathens" and "infidels").

SPANISH INQUISITION

On November 1, 1471, Pope Sixtus IV published the papal bull "Exigit Sincerae Devotionis Affectus," establishing the Spanish Inquisition in the kingdom of Castile. However, he was unhappy with the excesses of

the Inquisition and condemned its most flagrant abuses in 1482. In 1483 Sixtus IV encouraged the Venetians to attack Ferrara, desiring it for one of his nephews. The angered Italian princes joined together and forced Sixtus IV to make peace but Sixtus, in response subjected Venice to his interdict in 1483 – he is also known for his lining of the State coffers and selling high offices to the privileged.

BORGIA BECAME POPE

In 1492 Rodrigo Borgia Lanzol was elected as Pope Alexander VI. Before his election, he was the vice chancellor of the Roman Catholic Church and in this position, he amassed enormous wealth spending his days as a Renaissance prince. He fathered a number of children for whom he provided their upkeep, having done so mainly in Spain. However, his position was put at risk by Charles VIII, king of France, who invaded Italy in 1494 affirming his claim to the kingdom of Naples. However, in a meeting between the king and the pope, the latter received the traditional obeisance from the monarch. Alexander VI refused to support the king's claim to Naples and through an alliance entered into with Milan, Venice, and the Holy Roman emperor, he eventually forced the French to withdraw from Italy.

In 1493, in the wake of Columbus's discoveries, he issued a bull granting Spain the exclusive right to lay claim to all New World lands discovered west of the north-south line, about 320 miles, west of the Cape Verde Islands. To Portugal, he granted similar rights for discoveries made east of the demarcation line. His reign helped to inspire the Protestant Reformation. Alexander VI also granted the Spanish throne the privilege and duty to oversee the propagation of Christianity (Rome's version thereof), among Spain's subjects in the New World.

PROTESTANT REFORMATION

In 1517 the Protestant Reformation is set in motion at Wittenberg when Martin Luther publishes his "95 Theses" against the Catholic practice of selling indulgences. Pope Leo X excommunicated Martin Luther on January 3, 1521. Three months later, under the protection of

Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony, Martin Luther first appeared before Charles V and the Imperial Diet facing charges due to his religious writings and in 1526, he prints his German translation of the Bible. In 1536 William Tyndale is burned at the stake for translating the Bible in English.

ORDER OF THE JESUITS

On September 27, 1540: The Society of Jesus (Jesuits), a religious order under Ignatius Loyola, was approved by Pope Paul III. The Jesuits became the chief agents of the Church of Rome initiating and expanding the counter reformation.

RESPONSE TO THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

On December 13, 1545, Pope Paul III convened the Ecumenical Council of Trent to prepare the Catholic response to the Protestant Reformation. Its rulings set the tone for Catholic society for at least three centuries. The Council met for twenty-five sessions between 13 December 1545 and 4 December 1563. Pope Paul III presided over the first eight sessions (1545–47), Pope Julius III over the twelfth to sixteenth sessions (1551–52) and Pope Pius IV over the seventeenth to twenty-fifth sessions (1562–63).

CREATION OF A JEWISH GHETTO IN ROME

On July 17, 1555, Pope Paul IV issued the Papal bull, Cum Nimis Absurdum which ordered the creation of a Jewish ghetto in Rome. The Pontiff set its borders near the Rione Sant'Angelo, an area where large numbers of Jews already resided and ordered it to be walled off from the rest of the city. A single gate locked every day at sun-set, was the only means of reaching the rest of the city. The Jews themselves were forced to pay all the design and construction costs of the project. The papal bull restricted the number of synagogues to one per city. All the Jews were forced to wear distinctive yellow hats, especially outside the ghetto, and they were also forbidden to trade in everything but food and second-hand clothes. Christians of all ages were encouraged to treat the Jews as second-class citizens.

By the end of Paul IV's five-year reign, the number of Roman Jews had dropped by half. His anti-Semitic legacy endured for over 300 years. The ghetto he established ceased to exist only with the dissolution of the Papal States in 1870, its walls torn down in 1888.

In order to crack down on the growing threat of Protestantism, Paul IV introduced the Index Librorum Prohibitorum (Index of Prohibited Books). Under his authority, all books written by Protestants were banned, together with Italian and German translations of the Latin Bible.

GREGORIAN CALENDAR

On February 24, 1582, Pope Gregory XIII issued the papal bull *Inter Gravissimas* declaring that the day after Thursday, October 4, 1582, would not be Friday, October 5, but Friday, October 15, 1582. The new Gregorian calendar duly replaced the long-used Julian calendar. The Catholic countries of Spain, Portugal, Poland, and Italy accepted the new calendar willingly while France and some states of the Dutch Republic, as well as various Catholic states in Germany and Switzerland only followed suit within a year or two with Hungary coming onboard in 1587. However, more than a century passed before Protestant Europe accepted the new calendar.

THE PEACE OF WESTPHALIA

A series of peace treaties were signed between May and October 1648 in the Westphalian cities of Osnabrück and Münster, largely ending the European religious wars. Peace negotiations between France and the Habsburgs began in Cologne in 1641 when it was decided that all parties would recognise the Peace of Augsburg of 1555, giving each prince the right to determine the religion of his own state. The options were Catholicism, Lutheranism, and now Calvinism.

Christians living in principalities where their denomination was not that of the established church were granted the right to practice their faith in private, as well as in public during allotted hours.

Here the papacy lost its exclusive and sole control of ecclesiastical affairs. It should be noted that the peace negotiations that led to the

signing of this treaty began in 1641 and which is 1,261 years after the Edict of Thessalonica (the edict of Gratian and Valentinian II) was issued in 380.

FRENCH REVOLUTION

1789 saw the start of the French Revolution.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE INVADES ITALY

In 1796 French Republican troops under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Italy defeating the papal troops. Pope Pius VI asked for peace and which was granted at Tolentino on February 19, 1797. However, on December 28, 1797, a riot broke out in Rome and as a result thereof, General Berthier marched to Rome, entered it unopposed on February 10, 1798, proclaiming the Roman Republic and demanding of the pope the renunciation of his temporal authority.

Pius refused and was taken prisoner. He was escorted from the Vatican to Siena, and from there to the Certosa near Florence, however, the French declared war against Tuscany and Pius VI was escorted to the citadel of Valence, where he died six weeks after his arrival, on August 29, 1799. Pius VI's body was embalmed but was not buried until January 30, 1800.

RELIGIOUS PEACE WITH ROME

On July 15, 1801, Pope Pius VII and Napoleon signed the Concordat of 1801 which arranged religious peace with Rome and the granting of equality to Jews. It further solidified the Roman Catholic Church as the majority church of France, reinstating most of its civil status.

On December 2, 1804, Napoleon took the crown from Pope Pius VII's hands and crowned himself Emperor of the French in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, and by 17 May 1809 all the Papal States were annexed by France. However, Pope Pius VII quickly responded, excommunicating Napoleon but during this period of conflicting interests, he himself was taken captive, serving as prisoner of France up until 1814.

UNIFICATION OF ITALY

On September 20, 1870, Italian troops took control of the Papal States, leading to the unification of Italy and on October 2, the Papal States voted in favour of unification with Italy whereupon the capital of Italy was moved from Florence to Rome. The abolition of the Papal States freed the Jews from restrictions in Rome's ghetto.

SOVEREIGN STATE OF THE VATICAN

On February 11, 1929, The Lateran Treaty was signed by Benito Mussolini and Cardinal Gasparri establishing the sovereign State of the Vatican City. The Italian government paid the Vatican \$91.7 million for the papal lands it had seized in 1870.

CONCLUSION

From what we have established thus far, we can, with bold confidence, say that there was, originally, one great sovereignty represented by the “fourth beast”, and that this sovereignty was the great pagan Roman Empire. Furthermore, as confirmed by history, this one great united power was broken up into a large number of separate and independent sovereignties, prophetically indicated by the number ten and symbolised by the ten horns.

We have also learned that another peculiar and distinct power sprang up among the ten horns and that this new power started small, but it grew to have become a mighty power. This peculiar ecclesiastical and civil power is symbolised by the “little horn”.

However, in order to establish whether the little horn is in fact represented by the papacy, we will examine the peculiarities thereof in the light of what history tells us about this very powerful entity.

THE LITTLE HORN WOULD RISE AND STAND AMONG THE OTHERS

That is after the other ten have already been established as powers. The little horn would then gain strength and share power with the other ten.

The implication is that the papal power would arise out of the Roman Empire, and it would also be one of the many sovereignties among which the vast power of the “fallen” or broken Roman Empire would be divided. It would further share with the other ten in exercising authority over its subjects.

This is, in fact, a striking depiction of the papacy. We know that the papacy had risen as a remarkable power by the time the Roman Empire had fragmented into a large number of sovereignties. The papacy was seen rising, unobscured and small at first, however, gradually gaining strength, up until that stage where it surpassed some of the others in strength and glory, asserting itself in the world like none could ever equal.

The eleventh horn was, therefore, not a foreign power that invaded the ten, but rather it rose up within their midst, protruding from the head of the fourth beast. We can indeed say that an eleventh power was added to the ten. History confirms that the papal power at the beginning, when it at first asserted civil authority only, progressively blossomed out as just one more political power in which the mighty, vast Roman Empire culminated.

THE LITTLE HORN WOULD BE DIFFERENT FROM THE REST

It certainly does not require much superior knowledge of world history to know that the papacy has been and still is vastly different from any other sovereignty or kingdom past or present. The fact of the matter is that the Papacy is a combination of spiritual and secular power which in itself makes it much different from the rest.

THE LITTLE HORN WOULD PLUCK UP THREE OF THE TEN HORNS

Anyone who has even the slightest knowledge of the history of the papacy and its papal power will know that it was small and insignificant in its origin. Also, its ascendancy over the world was undoubtedly the result of slow but steady growth in power. In fact, its first appearance and form were so undefined, that one of the most

difficult things in history is to know exactly when it began or to determine the exact date of its origin as a distinct power.

The prophecy clearly demands that three of the ten powers or sovereignties would be uprooted before the power of the little horn, i.e., before the power of the little horn would manifest. The uprooted three would either cease to exist as separate sovereignties or they would be added to the sovereignty of the emerging little horn causing the three uprooted kingdoms to cease playing any significant part in the history of the world. Scholars, as a matter of fact, disagree on exactly who these three uprooted sovereignties were.

Gill⁷³ notes that Mr. Mede (Joseph Mede 1586 – 1639) lists them as the Greeks, the Longobards and the Franks.

Sir Isaac Newton^{62c} names the Exarchate of Ravenna, the Lombards and the Senate and dukedom of Rome.

Considering Mede's list, it is questionable whether the kingdom of the Franks or Germans in Italy can be said to have been properly uprooted before the power or policy of the papacy. There were indeed long struggles and contests among the popes and emperors, but the question is, did the papacy ever reign so totally over the emperors as to have stamped their presence out in Italy, seizing and annexing their dominions to his own?

In Newton's list, the three kingdoms he proposed as representative of the three horns, were indeed uprooted and subdued to papal control, however, the only problem with such assumption is that only two of the three are mentioned in his list of ten kingdoms. The Senate and Dukedom of Rome are then excluded.

The following explanation by Bishop Thomas Newton^{43d} may throw light on Sir Isaac Newton's reasoning:

1. The Exarchate of Ravenna belonged to the Greek emperors and Ravenna was, therefore, the capital of their dominions in Italy. At the instigation of the pope, it revolted, and it was subsequently seized by Aistulphus, the king of the Lombards who wanted to make himself master of Italy. This compelled the pope to call on Pepin, king of France, for military aid. Pepin responded marching into Italy and subduing the Lombards, also some other territories in Italy, forcing them to surrender.

Although the Exarchate of Ravenna was not restored to the Greek emperor as it should have been, Pepin gave it to Peter and his successors (papacy). Pope Zachary's acknowledgement of Pepin as lawful sovereign of France, elicited Pepin's bestowal of a principality not belonging to the parties involved, on Pope Stephan II, Zachary's successor.

And so, says Platina,⁴⁵ the name of the Exarchate, which had continued from the time of Narses to the taking of Ravenna, one hundred and seventy years, was extinguished.

All this was effected in the year 755 according to Sigonius. From this period on, the popes, now temporal princes, no longer date their epistles and bulls by the years of the emperor's reign, but by the years of their own advancement to the papal chair.

2. The kingdom of the Lombards, whose subjects were Arian Christians, was obviously a thorn in the flesh for the popes. Under the leadership of Desiderius, in the time of Pope Adrian I, the Lombards invaded the dominions of the pope. Again, the pope called on the new king of France, the successor of Pepin, Charles the Great who invaded and conquered the Lombards giving a great part of the Lombard's dominion to the pope.

Not only did he then confirm the donations of his father Pepin, but he also made an addition to his list of other countries such as Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, the Sabine territory and that part of Tuscany belonging to the Lombards. He personally signed the documents of these donations himself also having had them signed by the bishops and other great men, laying the signed documents on the altar of St Peter, this sacrificial gesture bringing the kingdom of the Lombards to an abrupt end - all happening in 774.

3. The states of Rome were subject to the popes in all things of a spiritual nature, but for the temporal things they were governed by the senate and people who retained many of their old privileges even after their defection from the eastern emperors. They, i.e, the people, elected both the western emperor as well as the pope. Some time after Charles the Great (Charlemagne) had ended the reign of the Lombards, he again came to Rome and this time, the pope, the

bishops and the people made him Roman patrician, which is the degree of honour and power next to that of the emperor.

Charles then settled the affairs of Rome allowing the pope to rule over the states of Rome but after a few years, the people of Rome rebelled against Pope Leo III, Leo's accusers were slain and banished, and he was declared superior to all human authorities. As is well known, this power in time passed into the hands of the popes who became their civil as well as their ecclesiastical head, the freedom of ancient Rome culminating in the papacy.

While the Saxons, the Franks, and all the rest continued their independence as civil powers, the Roman states passed entirely into the dominion of the pope, and as independent kingdoms or sovereignties ceased to be.

This is the solution in regard to the “three horns” that were plucked up, as given by Newton. However, absolute certainty in a case of this kind cannot be expected if we take into consideration the confusion and indefiniteness of that portion of history. Had three of these powers been subjected to papal dominion - either disappearing or having been absorbed in its dominion - it would have been all that was required in fulfilment of the prophecy. Faber says:

...if then we cast our eyes upon the preceding list of the ten primary kingdoms, we shall perceive, that the only three, which were seated in Italy, are the Herulo-Turingic, the Ostrogothic, and the Lombardic: and, if we next turn to history, we shall find, that these three identical kingdoms were successively eradicated in the immediate presence of the Papacy before which they were geographically standing, and that the temporal principality which bears the name of St. Peter's Patrimony was carved out of the mass of their subjugated dominions.¹⁸

Bower⁶⁷ again believes that the temporal dominions granted by Pepin to the pope, or by the intervention of the kings of France were (a) the Exarchate of Ravenna, (b) the Pentapolis and (c) the city and dukedom of Rome.

Professor Gaussen⁵⁰ alleges that the three kingdoms refer to the Heruli, the Ostrogoths, and the Lombards.

I tend to agree with Professor Gaußen. As previously mentioned in this document, the papacy had no tolerance for Arian Christians. The Heruli, more accurately called the kingdom of Odoacer, who sacked Rome only to become the first barbarian to be called king of Italy, stood in the way of the papacy's growth, however, they disappeared from history after the Ostrogoths replaced them as rulers of Italy.

Unfortunately for the papacy, the Ostrogoths too were Arian Christians but fortunately for the papacy, Emperor Justinus, a devout follower of the pope, drove them from Italy and, needless to say, they too disappeared from history.

The Lombards were quick to fill the void left by the disappearance of the Ostrogoths. However, the Lombards were also followers of the pesky Arian doctrine and therefore they too had to be removed. Gathered from what was said previously, it came as no surprise that they too lost the battle and vanished from the scene, whereafter the stage was set for the papacy to grow to the mighty ecclesiastical and temporal power they so desperately wanted to be.

THE LITTLE HORN WOULD SPEAK OUT AGAINST THE MOST-HIGH

To speak out against the Most-High is another way of saying to be guilty of blasphemy. Blasphemy either (a) denies or takes away something that belongs to God, or (b) it claims for itself the names, attributes and abilities of God. A study of the history of the papacy shows that in both senses it has been guilty in this aspect. Papal supremacy has indeed, throughout the ages, claimed for itself titles and prerogatives only belonging to God.

In order to illustrate my point, I will quote from the prominent work of Lucius Ferraris, of whom the Catholic Encyclopedia says:

An eighteenth-century canonist of the Franciscan Order. The exact dates of his birth and death are unknown, but he was born at Solero, near Alessandria in Northern Italy. He was also a professor, provincial of his order, and consultor of the Holy Office. It would seem he died before 1763. He is the author of the "Prompta Bibliotheca canonica, juridica, moralis, theologica, necnon ascetica, polemica, rubricistica, historica", a veritable encyclopedia of religious knowledge. The first

*edition of this work appeared at Bologna, in 1746. A second edition, much enlarged, also a third, was published by the author himself. The fourth edition, dating from 1763 seems to have been published after his death. This, like those which followed it, contains the additions which the author had made to the second edition under the title of additiones auctoris, and also other enlargements (additiones ex aliena manu) inserted in their respective places in the body of the work (and no longer in the appendix as in the former editions) and supplements. The various editions thus differ from each other. The most recent are: that of the Benedictines (Naples, 1844-55), reproduced by Migne (Paris, 1861-1863), and an edition published in Paris, 1884. A new edition was published at Rome in 1899 at the press of the Propaganda in eight volumes, with a volume of supplements, edited by the Jesuit, Bucceroni, containing several dissertations and the recent and important documents of the Holy See. This supplement serves to keep up to date the work of Ferraris, which will ever remain a precious mine of information, although it is sometimes possible to reproach the author with laxism.*²⁷

Laxism is the doctrine that, in cases of doubt in moral matters, the more liberal course should always be followed.

The following are a few extracts from his work. The Latin text is copied from the book, and the English translation is the best I could find. Those who are proficient in Latin will probably translate the text a little differently.

Quotes 1, 2, 3, 7 and 11 page 215:

- *Papa tantae est dignitatis et celsitudinis, ut non sit simplex homo, sed quasi Deus, et vicarius Dei.* (The pope is of so great dignity and loftiness that he is not a simple man, but as it were God, and the vicar [representative] of God).
- *Unde Papa adeo Summae et Supremae Dignitatis est, ut proprie loquendo non sit in Dignitate constitutus, sed potius in ipso culmine Dignitatum positus.* (The pope is of such lofty and supreme dignity that properly speaking, he has not been established in any rank of dignity, but rather has been placed upon the very summit of all ranks of dignities).

- *Papa idem est ac Pater Patrum. Et hoc nomine uti potest solus Summus Pontifex.* (The pope is the Father of fathers. Only he can be named Supreme Pontiff).
 - *Et merito solus Papa appellatur nomine Sanctissimi, quia solus ipse est Vicarius Christi, qui est fons et origo, atque plenitudo omnis Sanctitatis.* (The pope alone is deservedly called by the name most holy because he alone is the Vicar of Christ, who is the fountain, source and fullness of all holiness).
 - *Item episcopus seu dioecesanus totius orbis.* (He is a bishop with jurisdiction over the whole world).

Quotes 12, 13, 14, 15 and 18 page 216:
 - *Item divinus monarcha, ac imperator supremus et rex regum.* (He is likewise the divine monarch, and supreme emperor, and king of kings).
 - *Hinc Papa triplici corona coronatur tanquam Rex Coeli, et terrae, et Infernorum.* (Hence the pope is crowned with a triple crown, as king of heaven and of earth and of hell).
 - *Imo Romani Pontificis excellentia, et potestas, nedum est circa Coelestia, Terrestria et Infernalia, set etiam super Angelos, quorum ipse major est.* (Moreover, the superiority and the power of the Roman Pontiff by no means pertains only to heavenly things, but also earthly things, and to things under the earth, and even over the angels, of whom he is greater).
 - *Ita ut si foret possibile, quod Angeli errarent in Fide, vel contra Fidem sentirent, per Papam judicari et excommunicari possent.* (So that if it were possible that the angels might err in the faith, or might think contrary to the faith, they could be judged and excommunicated by the pope).
 - *Deveniendo igitur ad Papae auctoritatem, Papa est quasi Deus in Terra unicus Christifidelium Princeps, Regum omnium Rex maximus, plenitudinem potestatis continens, cui Terreni simul, ac Coelestis Imperii Gubernacula ab Omnipotenti Deo credita sunt, proutclare habetur.* (When we come therefore to the pope's authority, the pope is as God on earth, the only Christian prince, greatest king of kings, having a plenitude of unbroken power, entrusted by the omnipotent God to govern the earthly and heavenly kingdoms).
- Quotes 30, 31 and 32 page 218:

- *Papa tantae est auctoritatis et potestatis, ut possit quoque Leges Divinas modificare, declarare, vel interpretari.* (The pope is of so great authority and power, that he is able to modify, declare, or interpret even divine laws).
- *Papa jus divinum potest modificare, cum ejus potestas non sit ex homine, sed ex Deo, et in terris Dei vices fungitur com amplissima potestate oves suas ligandi, et solvendi.* (The pope can modify divine law since his power is not of man, but of God, and he acts as vicegerent of God upon earth with most ample power of binding and losing his sheep).
- *Papa enim hoc potest etiam sine Concilio Generali. cum Concilium Generale non sit supra Papam, sed Papa sit supra Generale Concilium, ut abunde probatum est.* (The pope has sole power also at general councils. As the pope is above general councils, they may not contradict him, as is abundantly proved).

It is true these are the words of Ferraris for which, they say, popes cannot be held responsible, yet there is no record of any one of them rejecting Ferraris or, for that matter, distancing themselves from his statements.

Saint Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), a Jesuit Cardinal wrote in his book Debates on the Christian Controversies of Faith Against Contemporary Heresy that all the names that Scripture applies to Christ are also to be applied to the pope.

Here is the Latin text extracted from chapter 17:

Secundo probatur ratione, in scripturis fundata: nam omnia nomina, quae in scripturis tribuuntur Christo, unde constat eum esse supra Ecclesiam, eadem omnia tribuuntur Pontifici: ac primum, Christus est paterfamilias in domo sua, quae est Ecclesia, Pontifex in eadem, est summus oeconomus, id est, paterfamilias loco Christi, Lucae 12 - (it is proved by an argument, founded in the scriptures: for all the names, which in the Scriptures are applied to Christ, proving him to be above the Church, are in like manner applied to the Pontiff: as first, Christ is head of the family in his own house, which is the Church. The Pontiff is high steward in the same, that is he is head of the family in the place of Christ, Luke 12).¹⁴

Doctor Weninger, a Missionary of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), wrote as follows:

At the General Council of Constantinople IV, Pope Ignatius himself wrote, in a similar manner, to Pope Nicholas. His letter, which was read during the third session of the Council, contains such expressions as the following: "For the ailments of the body there are many physicians; but for the wounds of the soul there is but one, the Bishop of Rome (p. 132).

The fifth Canon of the Council (General Council of Lateran IV ordered by Innocent III in 1215) pronounced the Church of Rome "the mother and teacher of all other churches. (p. 139).⁶⁰

At the General Council of Florence the Greek Fathers of the East declared:

We define that the Apostolic See, that is, the Roman Pontiff, has the right of primacy over all the churches of the world; that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of St. Peter; that he is the very Vicar of Christ, the head of the whole Church, the Father and teacher of all the faithful; that, in the person of Peter, he was entrusted by our Lord with full power to feed, direct, and govern the whole flock of Christ. Such is manifestly the doctrine taught by the Acts of the General Councils, as well as by the sacred Canons.

On this declaration Weninger comments:

Almost every word of this definition is pregnant with meaning. In it, the Council declares, that the Pope is a very Peter in authority; that he is the true Vicar of Christ, the teacher of all Christians, and consequently also of Bishops; that he has received from Christ himself, not merely some power, but the plenitude of power, for the direction and guidance of the Church; and finally, that the acts of the General Councils and the canons of the Church prove this sovereign authority to have been always recognized by the faithful, and exercised by the Popes from the very birth of Christianity. We can not omit to call especially the attention of the reflecting reader to the expression: "Verum Christy Vicarium," "The true and real Vicar of Christ." The Popes often were called the successors of St. Peter, by General Councils and representatives of Christ. But here the Pope, with all the enforcing

strength of a definition, is called the true Vicar of Christ - the eternal truth! Would this be true, if the Pope could err in matters of faith? Christ himself promised to send, in his place, the Holy Ghost as Vicar. Defining now, that the Pope is the true Vicar of Christ, the Church implicitly identified the authority of the Pope in the Church, with the ministry of the Holy Ghost in and for the Church, to be in the Church the living "organ of the Holy Ghost," the true "Paraclete," its comforter. Yes, we feel it, especially in our times. Or is Pius IX not eminently the "organ of the Holy Ghost," the "Paraclete" and comforter, at present, for the Church of God? (pp. 148 – 150).

The following is a summary of some of the well-known claims made by the papacy:

1. In an article, "Pope Innocent III and the marks of a great Papacy," published in Catholicism.org on June 7, 2010, the author says that:

The orthodoxy and clarity of Innocent's vision is evident from the very beginning of his papacy. In his inaugural sermon, we see that Innocent clearly understood the position of the papacy in both human history and in God's salvific will for man.¹⁰

Innocent said:

Who am I and of what lineage that I should take my place above kings? For to me it is said in the prophets, 'I have this day set thee over nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant' [He quotes Je. 1:10.] To me it is said in the apostles, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' [Quote Matt.16:19.] The successor of St. Peter is the Vicar of Christ; he has been established as mediator between God and man, below God but beyond man; less than God but more than man; who shall judge all and be judged by no one.

The author of the article goes on and says:

From his other writings it is clear that Innocent III understood the pre-eminence of the spiritual over the temporal, including the predominance of the Church over the State. For example, in his letter to King John Lackland of England he writes, "Jesus Christ wills that the

kingdom should be priestly, and the priesthood kingly. Over all, he has set me as his vicar upon earth, so that, as before Jesus ‘every knee shall bow,’ in like manner to his vicar all shall be obedient, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. Pondering this truth, thou, as a secular prince, has subjected thy realm to Him to whom all is spiritually subject.

2. From the Dictatus Papae of Pope Gregory VII we see that, (a) for the pope alone is it lawful, according to the needs of the time, to make new laws, to assemble new congregations, to make an abbey of a canonry, and, on the other hand, to divide a rich bishopric and unite the poor ones, (b) the pope alone may use the Imperial Insignia, (c) all princes shall kiss the feet of the pope alone, (d) the pope may be judged by no one, (e) the Roman Church has never erred, nor will it err, to all eternity – Scripture being witness, and (f) he who is not at peace with the Roman Church shall not be considered “Catholic.”
3. The pope has the authority and is above all the orders of the priesthood, that is, the pope is above all pastors, bishops and primates.
4. The pope has the authority and is above all kings, emperors and princesses.
5. The pope has the right to place nations under interdict, to dispose of kings and to dissolve their subjects from their oaths of allegiance.
6. Papal infallibility which is a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church states that, in virtue of the promise of Jesus to Peter, the pope is preserved from the possibility of error when he officially exercises his duty as the shepherd and teacher of all Christians. At the fourth session of the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) the following statement was made in paragraph 9 under the heading, “First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” -

Therefore, faithfully adhering to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith, to the glory of God our savior, for the exaltation of the Catholic religion and for the salvation of the Christian people, with the approval of the Sacred Council, we teach and define as a divinely revealed dogma that when the Roman Pontiff speaks EX CATHEDRA, that is when, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his

supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church, he possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals. Therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not by the consent of the Church, irreformable. So then, should anyone, which God forbid, have the temerity to reject this definition of ours: let him be anathema. Given at Rome in public session, solemnly held in the Vatican Basilica in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy, on the eighteenth day of July, in the twenty-fifth year of Our Pontificate. In conformity with the original. Joseph, Bishop of St. Polten Secretary to the Vatican Council. Notes: (1) The Profession of faith of the other fathers added: and I pledge and swear true obedience to the Roman Pontiff, the successor of blessed Peter the Prince of the Apostles, and Vicar of Jesus Christ. (2) Authority to grant forgiveness of sins, an authority which the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ gave to Him, and Him alone.

THIS NEW INSTITUTION WOULD WEAR DOWN THE SAINTS OF THE MOST-HIGH

Anyone with even a slight knowledge of the history of the papacy will know that the institution has always been very quick to label those who do not agree with its doctrines or dare to voice any criticism against it as heretics. In its very long history, the papacy showed very little tolerance towards those whom they have branded as heretics. However, these so-called heretics were often people or groups of people whose understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ differed from the doctrines of the Roman Church; people who would not bend under the dictatorial rule of the pope, his cardinals and priests; people who believed that Jesus Christ, and Him alone, is the Head of the Church. Throughout history, we encounter these kinds of heretics and throughout history, the papacy regarded them as enemies who should be punished.

The papacy has, undoubtedly been guilty of atrocious persecutions directly or indirectly, waged against thousands, even

millions, of Christians who did not follow their lead. A quick research of the persecutions against the Albigenses and the Waldenses would be enough to prove how they used their power to wear down the saints of the Most-High. Added to these persecutions were the bloodshed of the Inquisition, the ravages of the Duke of Alva and the fires of Smithfield, to name but a few.

In 1208 Pope Innocent III proclaimed a crusade against the Waldenses and the Albigenses in which an estimated one million people died. Those who were brutally put to death in the Inquisition amount to at least one hundred and fifty thousand.

From the edict of Charles V against the Protestants, to the declaration of the peace of Chateau Cambresis in 1559, fifty thousand people were hanged, beheaded, burned or buried alive, for the crime of heresy. Even the slightest acquaintance with the history of the papacy should convince anyone that what we read in Da.7:21, “...making war with the saints” and “...wearing out the saints of the Most-High” is indeed applicable to the papacy.

The very threat of excommunication was often enough to persuade those who thought to go against the Church, to rather bury their grievances than to oppose Rome. The consequences of excommunication can rightly be compared to the fate of a leper in the days of Jesus's ministry on earth. The excommunicated were deprived of everything a human being needed to survive within a community.

THIS INSTITUTION WOULD INTEND TO ALTER TIMES AND LAWS

Again, from Lucius Ferraris's “Quotes” mentioned above, I repeat the following quotations:

Papa tantae est auctoritatis et potestatis, ut possit quoque leges divinas modificare, declarare, vel interpretari, ad num. (The pope is of such great authority and power, that he is able to modify, declare, or interpret even divine laws).

Papa jus divinum potest modificare, cum ejus potestas non sit ex homine, sed ex Deo, et in terris Dei vices fungitur com amplissima potestate oves suas ligandi, et solvendi. (The pope can modify divine law since his power is not of man, but of God, and he acts as

vicegerent of God upon earth with most ample power of binding and losing his sheep).

THEY WILL BE GIVEN INTO THE HANDS OF THE LITTLE HORN FOR A GIVEN TIME

The saints of the Most-High will be given into the hands of the little horn for a period of time that equals “a time, times and half a time,” and as explained above, I believe it to be either twelve hundred and sixty literal years or some period of time that would suddenly come to an end in the third-time period mentioned. If, then, the little horn, as a symbol, is represented by the papacy, and the people of God would be subjected to its power, and adopting the 1260 years assumption, then, it would be great if we could, for certain, determine when the papacy began to exercise its reign and control of the ordinary people. By adding twelve hundred and sixty years to such a date would give us the approximate time when the papacy's dominance would come to an end.

However, there is nothing more difficult in history than the determination of the time when the papacy exactly began to exercise its power, that is, when its peculiar dominating power over the people of God commenced in the world, or what were its first distinguished acts that would define this control. History has not left us an affixed an undoubtful date to mark this event. Different writers have assigned different periods for the rise of the papacy as well as different acts or historic events to mark its advent. The following dates and events have been ascribed thereto:

1. An edict published by Justinian (533), plus a letter addressed at the same time to the pope, in which he acknowledged him as head of all the churches. Adding 1260 years to 538 brings us to 1798 and which is the year the pope's disposal and when the French General Berthier, under the leadership of the French directory, led him into captivity.

The object of the French directory was the destruction of the pontifical government, as the irreconcilable enemy of the republic. ...The aged pope [Pius VI] was summoned to surrender the

temporal government; on his refusal, he was dragged from the altar. ...His rings were torn from his fingers, and finally, after declaring the temporal power abolished, the victors carried the pope prisoner into Tuscany, whence he never returned (1798). The Papal States converted into the Roman Republic, were declared to be in perpetual alliance with France, but the French General was the real master at Rome. ...The territorial possessions of the clergy and monks were declared a national property, and their former owners cast into prison. The papacy was extinct: not a vestige of its existence remained, and among all the Roman Catholic powers, not a finger was stirred in its defence. The Eternal City had no longer prince or pontiff; its bishop was a dying captive in foreign lands, and the decree was already announced that no successor would be allowed in his place.⁵⁶

When, in 1797, Pope Pius VI fell grievously ill, Napoleon gave orders that in the event of his death, no successor should be elected to his office and that the Papacy should be discontinued. But the Pope recovered; the peace was soon broken; Berthier entered Rome on 10th February 1798 and proclaimed a Republic. The aged Pontiff refused to violate his oath by recognizing it and was hurried from prison to prison into France. Broken with fatigue and sorrows, he died . . . [in] August 1799, in the French fortress of Valence, aged 82 years. No wonder that half Europe thought Napoleon's veto would be obeyed, and that with the Pope the Papacy was dead.⁴⁸

2. The decree of the emperor Phocas (606), confirming what had been done by Justinian, and giving his sanction to the code of laws promulgated by him – a code of laws based on the acknowledged supremacy of the pope. The following is an extract from the New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia -

Pope Boniface III, of Roman extraction and the son of John Cataadioce, was elected to succeed Sabinian after an interregnum of nearly a year; he was consecrated 19 February, 607; d. 12 November of the same year. He had been ordained a deacon of the Roman Church and in 603 sent by Gregory the Great as apocrisiarius, or legate, to the court of Constantinople, where, by his tact and prudence, he appears to have gained the favourable

regard of Emperor Phocas. After his elevation to the See of Rome, Boniface obtained a decree from Phocas, against Cyriacus, Bishop of Constantinople, by which it was ordained, that "the See of Blessed Peter the Apostle should be the head of all the Churches", and that the title of "Universal Bishop" belonged exclusively to the Bishop of Rome — an acknowledgement somewhat similar to that made by Justinian eighty years before. [Novell., 131, c. ii, tit. XIV.]

3. The view of Rev. Robert Fleming.¹⁹ Of his view, Albert Barnes says the following:

Rev. Robert Fleming uttered the following remarkable language, as based on his calculations respecting the continuance of that power: "If we may suppose that Antichrist began his reign in the year 606, the additional one thousand two hundred and sixty years of his duration, were they Julian or ordinary years, would lead down to the year 1866, as the last period of the seven-headed monster. But seeing they are prophetic years only (of 360 days), we must cast away eighteen years in order to bring them to the exact measure of time that the Spirit of God designs in this book. And thus, the final period of the Papal usurpati (supposing that he did indeed rise in the year 606) must conclude with the year 1848." Whether this be considered as merely a happy conjecture — the one successful one among thousands that have failed, or as the result of a proper calculation respecting the future, no one in comparing it with the events of the year 1848, when the Pope was driven from Rome, and when a popular government was established in the very seat of the Papal power, can fail to see that it is remarkable.⁶⁷

3. The act of Pope Stephen, by which he confirmed Pepin in the kingdom about 752: At Quierzy the Frankish nobles gave their consent to a campaign in Lombardy. On July 28, 754, Pope Stephen anointed Pepin, as well as his two sons Charles and Carloman, at Saint-Denis in a memorable ceremony that was recalled in coronation rites of French kings until the end of the ancient regime in 1792. In return, in 756, Pepin's army forced the last Lombard king to surrender, and Pepin gave the pope the territories belonging to Ravenna. The gift included Lombard conquests in the Romagna and in the Duchy of Spoleto and Benevento and the

Pentapolis in the Marche (the "five cities" of Rimini, Pesaro, Fano, Senigallia and Ancona). The Donations of Pepin made the pope a temporal user for the first time. Pepin confirmed his Donations in Rome in 756, and in 774 his son, Charlemagne again confirmed and reasserted the Donation.

4. The opinion of Mr. Gibbon that Pope Gregory VII who became Pope in 1073 was the true founder of the papal power. He says:

Gregory VII, who may be adored or detested as the founder of the Papal monarchy, was driven from Rome, and died in exile at Salerno.^{23b}

The different events described above are proof enough of how difficult it is to attach a specific date to the rise of the papacy. However, history tells us that the papacy had great power over the people of, especially, Europe for a very, very long time. With the rise of the Reformation, starting with Luther's revolt against the Roman Catholic Church, it received a devastating blow that led to the eventual loss of its total authority over the saints of God.

By implication, the above mentioned events all confirm the supremacy of the pope above all, also the time when the papacy received temporal power and when the saints of God will be given into the hands of the little horn. However, does anyone of these events really mark the beginning of the oppression of the saints by the little horn? We have seen that long before the papacy was recognised as a separate autonomous power, the seeds for its birth was sown.

As early as 325, at the Council of Nicaea, Constantine gave the Church its first taste of political power.

He – [Constantine] – also put his seal on the decrees of bishops made at synods so that it would not be lawful for the rulers of provinces to annul what they had approved, since the priests of God were superior to any magistrate.^{17b}

That was the beginning of the moulding of the Church into a sovereign organisation.

As mentioned before, at the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 the doctrine of the Holy Trinity became the emblem of the Catholic Church and all who dared to challenge this doctrine were branded as heretics and subsequently given over to punishment.

According to the apostolic teaching and the doctrine of the Gospel, let us believe in the one deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a Holy Trinity. We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title of Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since, in our judgment, they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics and shall not presume to give to their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of the divine condemnation and in the second the punishment of our authority which in accordance with the will of Heaven we shall decide to inflict.¹¹

At this point in time the little horn – the apostate church – received the power to oppress anyone who would not bow to its doctrines, and it seems that it is fair to say that the people were now given into the hands of the little horn that was rapidly growing.

We also know, as mentioned before, that a series of peace treaties were signed between May and October 1648 in the Westphalian cities of Osnabrück and Münster, largely ending the European wars of religion. Peace negotiations between France and the Habsburgs began in Cologne in 1641. All parties would recognise the Peace of Augsburg of 1555, in which each prince would have the right to determine the religion of his own state.

As previously stated the options were Catholicism, Lutheranism, and at the time Calvinism. Christians living in principalities where their denomination was not the established church were guaranteed the right to practise their faith in private, as well as in public during allotted hours. Here the papacy lost its exclusive and sole control of ecclesiastical affairs.

It should be noted that the peace negotiations that led to the signing of this treaty began in 1641 which calculation is then 1,261 years after the Edict of Thessalonica was issued in 380.

Although Lutheranism and Calvinism still proclaimed the Nicene Trinitarian doctrine, they did not have the authority to physically punish those who disagreed with them. Also, Christians and Jews for the first time, since the Edict of Thessalonica could "legally" practise their faith in private in the dominions where their denomination was not the established church. They haven't yet enjoyed total freedom of

religion, but the absolute strangling oppression of the little horn was broken.

THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM

A

fter Daniel had, for what appears to be a long time, looked at

the rising of the little horn and what it was busy doing, he focused his attention on a new scene unfolding in his vision. In this scene, he saw what can be described as the setting up of a court of judgment.

⁹ I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire.

¹⁰ A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousands of thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.(ASV)

TILL THRONES WERE PLACED

The Hebrew word *keresavan* means a throne fitted and adorned for a king. These thrones were properly positioned as in a court of law and judgment was about to be passed. Some English translations read “thrones were cast down” which phraseology implies that there was at first a throwing down or overturning of Thrones and that the solemn judgment would follow at this stage.

The Chaldee word *re-mah* means to cast, to throw (as in Da. 3:21, 3:24 and 6:16), to set, to place, to impose tribute (Ezr. 7:24). The passage is rendered in the Latin Vulgate, “throni positi sunt - thrones were placed” and by the Greek Septuagint ετέθησαν (*etethesan*), “were placed.” In verse 26 the angel explains to Daniel that at the end of the period in which the little horn was exercising its power over the saints of God “the judgment shall be set, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end”.

From the aforesaid, it is reasonable to deduce that judgment will take place and that the agents of God will strip the little horn of its oppressive power. Keil expresses it as:

Seats, not merely a throne for God the Judge, but a number of seats for the assembly sitting in judgment with God. That assembly consists neither of the elders of Israel, nor of glorified men, but of angels (Psa. 89:8), who are to be distinguished from the thousands and tens of thousands mentioned in Da. 7:10; for these do not sit upon thrones, but stand before God as servants to fulfill His commands and execute His judgments.⁷⁸

AND ONE THAT WAS ANCIENT OF DAYS DID SIT

Although the Most-High God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Christ is meant by this phrase, we should realise that Daniel does not see the everlasting God though, for no man can or ever will see the Almighty God. In Exodus 33:18 Moses asked God to allow him see His glory.

If ever there was a human being who might have been "qualified" - so to say - to see God's glory, it would have been Moses. We know of no other man in the Bible with whom God communicated as directly and intermittently - on an ongoing basis - as He did with Moses. For instance, God gave him detailed instructions to build the tabernacle and all its peripherals, how to conduct the ceremonial sacrifices, how Aaron's attire should look, in fact everything pertaining to the tabernacle service and its maintenance.

Regardless of Moses's very special relationship with God, not even he could see the full measure of God's glory:

*And he (Moses) said, shew me, I pray thee, thy glory. And he (God) said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said thou **canst not see my face: for man shall not see me and live.** And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon the rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand until I have passed by and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back: **but my face shall not be seen.** (Ex. 33:18 – 23 ASV)*

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (John 1:18 ASV)

It is only by the grace of the Father that we can "see" Him in and through His only begotten Son, Jesus the Messiah, for it pleased the Father (God Almighty) that in Him (Jesus) should all fullness dwell (Col. 1:19).

What fullness dwells in the man Christ Jesus? The fullness of His Father, His power, His majesty, His character, indeed His whole ministry speaks of God the Father's glory revealed in and through Him. What Daniel saw in the vision was an aged man, which symbolically would mean a projection of the majesty of the Father (See Eze. 1:26). He, the Father, did sit for the purpose of judgment, though it is not as if judgment would be in a visible, literal form, just as that everything mentioned in this vision - represented in a symbolic way - will take place literally.

Should one insist that the proper interpretation demands that there would be a literal and visible judgment, then we should also insist on a literal "slaying of the beast, and a giving of his body to the flame" (Da. 7:11), and that all referred to here as symbols would then also literally occur.

Fact is, that all these events are referred to in symbols having an expressive meaning, but which, by their very nature and design, are not to be literally understood. What we can then deduce from this symbol is that an event or events would happen, and which indeed can be seen as a solemn judgment by God who would take away the oppressive power of the little horn.

By now we know that the little horn has lost its absolute ruling power over the saints of God. Events that had happened before, during and after the Reformation, have empowered each and everyone, who so wish, to escape from the ecclesiastical jail of apostasy.

Today each and every Christian has the right to read and/or study the word of God. No more do we have to rely on the clergy as the only source of knowledge and the only ones who have the right to reveal the treasures of God's Word to us.

HIS RAIMENT WAS WHITE AS SNOW, AND HIS HAIR

LIKE PURE WOOL

The reference here is to the long flowing robe that was worn by ancient princes, noblemen, or priests. White is an emblem of purity and honour and it is, therefore, a proper symbol of the purity of the judge, and of the justness of the sentence which he would pronounce. Both the above symbols clearly signify spotless purity and holiness.

HIS THRONE WAS FIERY FLAMES, AND THE WHEELS THEREOF BURNING FIRE

Fire and the shining of fire are often presented as symbols of the manifestation of God in the world. Fire represents the burning zeal with which God, on the one hand, punishes and destroys sin and, on the other hand purifies His own people.

A FIERY STREAM ISSUED AND CAME FORTH FROM BEFORE HIM

This is symbolic of the constant stream of purifying power that consumes everything sinful and hostile to God in the world.

THOUSANDS OF THOUSANDS MINISTERED UNTO HIM AND TEN THOUSAND TIMES TEN THOUSAND STOOD BEFORE HIM

God is often represented as attended to by great numbers of angels when he comes down to our world (Deut. 33:2), "he came with ten thousands of saints," that is, of holy ones, (Psa. 68:17), "the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." The word "ministered" means that they attended on him and those that minister unto Him are those whose duty it is to carry out the Divine sentence while those, an uncountable number, standing before him are those who are spectators of this great tribunal. The judgment here, however, is not upon the world at large but upon the beast. It is in preparation of

the handing over of the kingdom to the one who looked like the Son of man.

***THE JUDGMENT WAS SET, AND THE BOOKS WERE
OPENED***

This tells us that all the arrangements for this judgment were made and that the actual judgment was ready to begin. The books contain the records of the deeds of those who were about to be judged and when the great Judge will examine and evaluate all deeds done here below. This being then the appropriate time for Him to pass sentence on the inhabitants of the world.

THE SON OF MAN IS GIVEN DOMINION

I

In the closing stage of Daniel's vision, he saw something remarkable. Someone, a heavenly being, looking like a son of man appeared in the clouds:

¹³ I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

¹⁴ And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (ASV)

ONE LIKE UNTO A SON OF MAN

Daniel's vision clearly gripped his attention pointing to someone who was coming on the clouds of heaven. He looked to him like a "son of man," in other words he had the form of a human being. Some bibles capitalise the words son and man, but in biblical Hebrew, we do not have upper and lower-case letters. In the New Testament Jesus's favourite term by which He presents Himself was that of "Son of Man".

Regarding the "man" that Daniel saw, we find, as can be expected, a variety of opinions expressed by biblical scholars. As the phrase "son of man" occurs here in the vision, it is important to explain it properly as it appears to be an important part of the prophecy as a whole. The questions we may ask here are, What does it signify, To whom does it refer and, What would be its proper fulfilment?

Of the one-hundred-and-eight times the phrase "son of man" occurs in the Old Testament, one-hundred-and-six times it is from the Hebrew phrase *ben adam* "son of man". God calls the prophet Ezekiel ninety-three times *ben adam* as a constant reminder that he is a man, a

human being like all the rest. However, the Hebrew expression, "son of man" in Daniel 7:13 is *bar enosh* "son of man," and it is the only place that the phrase appears as such in the Old Testament.

It can perhaps be said that *ben adam* represents man in his physical or natural condition while *bar enosh* in its original meaning would probably refer to man as being weak and feeble, and as prone to be sickly.⁶⁷ Applied to anyone as "son of man," it would be used to imply that he is part of a race that is prone to weakness and infirmities.

The phrase "Son of Man" as used by Jesus when He referred to Himself, is in reference to His association with us ordinary human beings and that He was in all aspects a man. He was then one of us as He had taken our nature upon Himself (Phil. 2).

Although scholars commentaries on Daniel's vision and with "one like unto a son of man" over time varied widely, it is commonly understood by most of them that the one whom Daniel saw, indeed represents Jesus the Messiah. Even among Jewish writers, there are those who interpret this "son of man" as their Messiah. Gill says that in the ancient kabbalistic book of Zohar it is said:

*In the times of the Messiah, Israel shall be one people, to the Lord, and he shall make them one nation in the earth, and they shall rule above and below; as it is written, "behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven"; this is the King Messiah of whom it is written, "and in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven, set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed."*⁷³

AND HE CAME EVEN TO THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

He came to the "Ancient of Days" - to the Most-High God who is the source of all power. He comes as if to ask for a kingdom. He does not come to pronounce judgment on mankind. The crux of this passage is to show that God Almighty is the source of all power and that all who reign receive their authority from Him. Yes, even the Messiah receives his kingdom from the hand of his Father.

AND THERE WAS GIVEN HIM DOMINION, AND GLORY,

AND A KINGDOM

A fair interpretation of this text is that the one who is represented by the "son of man" receives from the one who is represented as the "Ancient of Days" authority, glory and a kingdom. Therefore, Jesus the Messiah, Son of Man, receives from God, his Father, all authority, all power, all honour, all glory and a kingdom. This is also the uniform representation in the New Testament.

*And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, **all authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.** (Math. 28:18 ASV)*

The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand. (Joh.3:35 ASV)

*For Christ must rule **until God defeats all enemies** and puts them under his feet. The last enemy to be defeated will be death. For the scripture says, "God put all things under his feet." It is clear, of course, that the words "all things" do not include God himself, who puts all things under Christ. But when all things have been placed under Christ's rule, then he himself, **the Son, will place himself under God**, who placed all things under him; **and God will rule completely over all.** (1 Cor. 15:25-28 GNB)*

*And how very great is his (God's) power at work in us who believe. This power working in us is the same as the mighty strength which he used when he raised Christ from death and seated him at his right side in the heavenly world. Christ **rules there above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers, and lords;** he has a title superior to all titles of authority in this world and in the next. God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to the church as supreme Lord over all things. (Eph. 1:19-22 GNB)*

From the above it should be clear that Jesus Christ at some point in time received complete authority to rule from God, His Father, but that He will at some other point in time return this rule to His Father so that "God will rule completely over all".

His Dominion Is An Everlasting Dominion

The kingdom that God has given to His Son would last forever. It should be noted that Jesus always referred to the kingdom as the kingdom of God. On the day of Pentecost Peter said that God hath made Jesus both Lord and Christ.

The Greek word translated as Lord is *kurios* and according to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, it is a title of honour, expressive of respect and reverence, with which servants salute their master.

Paul explains to the Philippians that God has highly exalted Jesus and gave him a name, i.e., a status that is far above every other name or status so that in the name of Jesus every knee in heaven and on earth shall bow to the glory of God. Jesus has therefore been appointed as the Supreme Master (Lord) of the whole of God's creation and He rules as the exalted King in the kingdom of God. Hallelujah!

*Behold, I come quickly;
and my reward is with me,
to render to each man according as his work is.
I am the Alpha and the Omega,
the first and the last,
the beginning and the end.
Blessed are they that wash their robes,
that they may have the right to come to the tree of life,
and may enter in by the gates into the city.
I am the root and the offspring of David,
the bright, the morning star.
And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.
And he that heareth, let him say, Come.
And he that is athirst, let him come:
he that will,
let him take the water of life freely.*

Revelation 22

PART V

Daniel Chapter 9

THE SEVENTY SEVENS

OVERVIEW OF THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

The Babylonian exile is the period in which a large number of Jews from the kingdom of Judah were exiled to Babylon. Why did this calamity befall the people of Judah? The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the inhabitants of Judah and said:

Jehovah hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, (but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear), saying, Return ye now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that Jehovah hath given unto you and to your fathers, from of old and even for evermore; and go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the work of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. (Je. 25:4-6 ASV)

Due to their disobedience and their refusal to follow in the ways of Jehovah, Jeremiah then prophesied:

Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Because ye have not heard my words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith Jehovah, and I will send unto Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations. Moreover, I will take from them the

voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the lamp. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith Jehovah, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it desolate forever. (Je. 25:8-12 ASV)

A closer look at the aforementioned, shows that the people of Judah alone were responsible for the calamity that befell them. It seems that they learned nothing from what had happened to the ten tribes who were, not long before, conquered by the Assyrians and dispersed among the nations of the earth. Having warned them Jehovah then tells them that He would employ the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, as His servant and agent to destroy their land holding them captive in Babylon. God also told them how long the punishment would last, and they would serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. If we carefully read the above prophecy of Jeremiah, we see that "*these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years*". It does, however, not say that the children of Judah will be in exile for seventy years. It also says that,

...when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith Jehovah, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it desolate forever.

This is a clear indication that the Neo-Babylonian kingdom will last no more than seventy years. Therefore, the seventy years primarily depicts the length of the Babylonian Empire's reign.

In the year 609 B.C. Pharaoh Neco of Egypt made Josiah's son Eliakim king of Judah and changed his name to **Jehoiakim**. Jehoiakim collected a tax from the people in proportion to their wealth, in order to raise the amount needed to pay the tribute demanded by the king of Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar II, the Babylonian crown prince, defeated Neco at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., and on his way back to Babylon he besieged Jerusalem and forced Jehoiakim to pay the tribute to his kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar took part of the furniture of the temple as booty also carrying back with him to Babylon several young men, the

sons of the principal Hebrew nobles, among whom were Daniel and his three friends.

Some authors suggest that he might have taken the young men as hostages for the submission and good order of the Hebrews in Judea. Some expositors, for some or other reason, see this as the beginning of the exile even though only a small number of men were taken to Babylon and the prophecy of Jeremiah doesn't support such assumption.

In the following years, the people of Jerusalem were divided into those who supported Egypt and those who would rather be content with Babylonian rule. Incited by false prophets, the rulers of Jerusalem revolted against Babylon. The Babylonians besieged the city for three months beginning in late 598 B.C. Jehoiakim, who died at the beginning of the siege, was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin (also called Jeconiah) who was only eighteen years old.

During the siege, Nebuchadnezzar himself came to Jerusalem and Jehoiachin surrendered to the Babylonians in the third month of his reign. The city fell on the second day of Adar, which relates to more or less March, 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar pillaged Jerusalem and its Temple and took Jehoiachin, his court and ten thousand other prominent citizens (including the prophet Ezekiel) back to Babylon.

Jehoiakim's uncle, Zedekiah was appointed king in his place, but the exiles in Babylon continued to regard Jehoiachin as their Exilarch, (a leader of the Jews during the Babylonian exile) or rightful ruler. The year 597/8 B.C. is the date generally recognised as the beginning of the Babylonian captivity.

Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, king of Judah but he changed his name to Zedekiah. Disregarding the lessons of history Zedekiah, in about the eighth or ninth year of his reign, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was now totally fed up with the people in Judah who did not appreciate his leniency and goodwill towards them. He therefore mustered all the strength of his army for an attack on Jerusalem. On the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, the Babylonian army set up camp outside the city. Jerusalem, however, was not an easy take.

The Babylonians built siege walls around the city and nothing and nobody was allowed to enter the city which was kept under siege until

Zedekiah's eleventh year. Some Jews managed to flee to Egypt taking Jeremiah against his will with them. On the ninth day of the forth month, 586 B.C., when the famine was so bad that the people had nothing left to eat, the city walls were broken through and Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. While Zedekiah was forced to look on, his sons were put to death before he himself was blinded, chained and taken to Babylon. The City and the Temple were destroyed and all the people, except the poorest of the land which he left as vine-dressers and farmers, were exiled to Babylon. This was the second large number of exiles taken to Babylon.

SEVENTY YEARS PREDICTED BY JEREMIAH

Jeremiah prophesied saying:

...this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith Jehovah, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it desolate forever (Je. 25:11-12 ASV), and,

for thus saith Jehovah, after seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. (Je. 29:10 ASV)

From the above versus prophesied by Jeremiah we see in chapter 25:11 that the nations will serve the Babylonian Empire for a period of seventy years, and, in 25:12 and 29:10, that is after the seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, God will judge the kingdom of the Babylonians causing the return of the exiled Jews to Jerusalem. We know that the Babylonians took control of the land of Judah 605 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar took some of the children or young men of Jerusalem, including Daniel and his friends, to serve in his court in Babylon.

In Daniel 9:1-2 we read:

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years whereof the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the prophet, for the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem, even seventy years. (ASV)

From what we learned previously, the Darius referred to here is Darius the Mede, who took over the reign of the Chaldeans (Babylonian) after the fall of Babylon (539/8 B.C.).

In 539/8 B.C., a combined force of the Medes and the Persians sacked the city of Babylon under the command of Cyrus, a Persian prince. Anderson in his excellent research work on Darius the Mede writes:

A correlation of biblical and extra-biblical data suggests that Cyrus obtained absolute power over the Medo-Persian Empire approximately two years after the fall of Babylon. Cyrus was preceded by the biblical Darius the Mede, who is called Cyaxares (II) by Xenophon, ...and...one conclusion is sure: there was a Median king named Darius who reigned as head of the Medo-Persian confederation at the time of Babylon's fall. Cyrus was his co-regent, the hereditary king of the realm of Persia, the crown prince of Media, the commander of the Medo-Persian army—yet it was King Darius who was officially recognized as the highest power in the realm.¹

Josephus records as follows:

... it came to Baltasar, who by the Babylonians was called Naboandelus; against him did Cyrus, the king of Persia, and Darius, the king of Media, make war., (and) ...this is the end of the posterity of king Nebuchadnezzar, as history informs us; but when Babylon was taken by Darius, and when he, with his kinsman Cyrus, had put an end to the dominion of the Babylonians, he (Darius) was sixty-two years old. He was the son of Astyages and had another name among the Greeks.^{31b}

It is worth noting, that Josephus knew that Darius (the Mede), the partner of Cyrus, was the son of Astyages and that he was called by another name among the Greeks.

Within about a year or two after Babylon was conquered, Cyrus rebelled against Darius the Mede and conquered him. Then in 536/7 B.C. Cyrus, now king of both Media and Persia made a decree that the house of God, the Temple, in Jerusalem should be restored. However, nothing is said about the city and whether or not he assumed that the restoration includes the rebuilding of Jerusalem can only be speculated on. It would be fair to say that when Cyrus made the decree to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, he for all practical purposes gave the Jews a free pass to return to their land, thereby effectively ending the period of the Babylonian captivity. Zerubbabel and the first group of exiles returned to Judah and work began on the rebuilding of the Temple. However, it was only partially reconstructed (Ez. 6:3).

Before we proceed to dissect and analyse Daniel's vision of the seventy sevens, it would be wise to take note of a few parameters that had, and still do, play an important role in how this vision was and still is approached by scholars, preachers, evangelists, theologians and anyone interested to know what it means.

First, the specific time set aside in which the events mentioned in the vision would happen, requires of the expositor to determine, as close as possible, the date such events took place. The events of the prophecy start at a specified point in time, following one after the other. If we knew the actual date that sets off the beginning of the seventy sevens time-frame it should, theoretically, solve the puzzle!

Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to be that simplistic as is apparent from the hundreds and hundreds of attempts made to solve the seventy sevens puzzle that have been produced over a span of centuries by even the best of best scholars. It is true that the largest part of the seventy sevens prophecy found its fulfilment in ancient times, i.e., before the birth of Jesus Christ.

It was a time when every prominent civilisation had its own dating system of important days and events. Something usually happened in the year of the reign of a king, such as in the second year of Josiah, king of Judah, or in the eleventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

Just to refresh the readers' minds, allow me to briefly recap. Most of these ancient civilisations used lunar years with 30 days in a month and each applying their own method to make allowance for the days lost and when compared to a solar year of about 365 days. Some

civilisations determined a year from Fall to Fall whilst others reckoned a year as from Spring to Spring. It is all but a straightforward process to marry the different calendars of the ancient world. In modern times the world, in general, uses the Gregorian calendar, and we notate ancient dates as before Christ B.C., or before the common era BCE. This was made possible on the whole by an Egyptian astronomer, geographer and astrologer, Claudius Ptolemy's "Canon of the Kings."

Ancient astronomers noted astronomical phenomena, such as eclipses taking place in ancient times. For example, on the second day of the fourth year of the reign of king X of say Babylon, the moon turned red. Since the universe created by God is mathematically precise and regular, astronomers can accurately calculate when such an event took place. It is also possible to accurately predict when eclipses will occur in future.

Ptolemy's canon lists kings of Babylon, Persia, the Macedonian and Roman era from 747 B.C. to 30 B.C. The Canon is generally considered by historians as accurate and it therefore forms the backbone of accepted chronology from 747 B.C. forward. However, some scholars found that his list of kings is not as accurate as is generally accepted. For more information on this subject, I would refer the ardent student to the brilliant work of Sir Isaac Newton^{42b} on the chronology of ancient kingdoms.

Secondly, history has left us with very little information about ancient civilisations. We, for purposes of clarity, rely heavily on writings left by historians such a Herodotus, Ctesias, Xenophon and Josephus but their accounts of events do not always agree, and they also often contradict each other. On closer examination, it seems that the accounts of the history of the ancient kingdoms as recorded in the Old Testament are still one of the best sources available to us.

GABRIEL'S MESSAGE TO DANIEL

Keep in mind that

D

aniel, the prophet, was a young man when he was taken to

Babylon after the first siege of Jerusalem by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. In his own words, Daniel tells us that he understood from the word of the LORD to Jeremiah, that Jerusalem would be desolate for seventy years (Da. 9:2). According to Strong's¹⁰⁹ the Hebrew word *chorbah*, generally translated as desolate, is the feminine form of *choreb*; which properly means drought, that is by implication a desolation, a decayed or desolate place, destruction or a place laid waste. He also determined that the seventy years was then at an end. This led him to seek the LORD in prayer and supplications, with fastings in sackcloth and ashes, interceding for his people! (Da. 9:1-19.)

In answer to his prayer, the Angel Gabriel appeared to him, giving him a remarkable prophecy concerning the immediate future of Israel and the appearance of Jesus, the Messiah (anointed) of the Most-High God.

²⁴ *Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make*

reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy.

²⁵ Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times.

²⁶ And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off and shall have nothing: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined.

²⁷ And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate.(ASV)

In verse 22 Daniel reports that the Angel spoke to him saying: "O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee wisdom and understanding." This wisdom is clearly not a skill that he could learn from reading books or listening to the Elders. God gave it to him as a gift. The same with understanding. His own intelligence was not enough. He needed guidance by the Spirit of God, and he received this because God loved him dearly.

The whole message is broken up into two parts. Da.9:24 contains a general statement in which the Angel said to Daniel that a definite time – 70 weeks – was set aside during which all that was to be done, in reference to Daniel's people and Jerusalem, would be effected. Jerusalem is the city which had been selected as the place where atonement was to be made for human transgression. The second part, Da. 9:25-27, tells us how the things mentioned in the general statement would be accomplished. The seventy weeks are divided into three segments 7, 62 and 1.

In summary, then, we can say that verse 24 contains the "what" that had to be accomplished in a very specified time and verses 25 through 27 telling us more about how it will be done.

Expositors over the ages have provided us with many different interpretations of this prophecy which can mainly be divided into either Christological or non-Christological views. The Christological camp interprets the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's prophecy as reaching its climax at the appearance of Jesus Christ. The non-Christological group again attempts to find the fulfilment of Daniel's seventy-weeks in the events leading up to the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes who, in 168 B.C., built a pagan altar over the altar of burnt offerings. This ruthless act sparked the Maccabean revolt which Antiochus tried to suppress with much cruelty (176-164) but all his efforts were unsuccessful.

I will now approach the seventy sevens vision listing all the identifiable events as seen and heard by the prophet. They are:

1. Seventy weeks have been determined concerning Daniel's people and his holy city.
2. The time is set aside to:
 - finish transgression;
 - make an end of sins;
 - make reconciliation for iniquity;
 - bring in everlasting righteousness;
 - seal up vision and prophecy and;
 - anoint the most holy.
3. A commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem will go forth.
4. The time that will elapse from the issuance of the command up until the Anointed One comes, will be seven weeks plus sixty-two weeks, that is, sixty-nine weeks.
5. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with street and moat – a ditch filled with water – but in distressful times.
6. After the sixty-two week period the Anointed One will be cut off and have nothing.
7. The people of the coming Prince will destroy the city and the Temple and the end thereof will come speedily like a flood but, until the end of the war that has been decreed there will be destruction.
8. He will confirm a covenant with many for one week.
9. In the middle of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and offerings to cease.
10. Wrath shall be poured out on the desolate.

In the hope of finding a reasonable, not necessarily only explanation, each of the above points will have to be examined.

COMMENTARY

SEVENTY WEEKS ARE DECREED

It seems there is no problem with the word "seventy". Besides, it is just a number, nothing more, nothing less. The Hebrew word generally translated as "weeks" is *shavuim*, which is the plural form of *shabua* and, according to Strong's¹⁰⁹ it literally means *sevened* or a period of seven or a group of seven. It can therefore refer to a period or group of seven days or even seven years. It should be noted that the Hebrew word *shabua* and its plural *shavuim* occurs in the whole of the Old Testament only 19 times; twice in Genesis 29:27&28 where Laban forced Jacob to marry Leah; once in Exodus 34:22; once in Numbers 28:26; four times in Deuteronomy 16:9,10&16; once in 2 Chronicles 8:13; once in Jeremiah 5:24 all concerning the observance of the feast of weeks (the Harvest Festival); six times in Daniel 9:24,25,26&27 concerning the Seventy Sevens and lastly twice in Daniel 10:2&3 concerning a period of mourning.

Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year, the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. (Lev. 25:2-5 NIV)

Count off seven sabbaths of years seven times seven years - so that the seven sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan. The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. For it is a jubilee and is to be

holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields. (Lev. 25:8-10 NIV)

I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it. (Lev. 26:33-35 NIV)

From the above verses we see that God required Israel to work their fields for six years and then leaving it untouched on the seventh year. Here we, (a) encounter the concept of a seven-year cycle that includes a sabbatical year (a year of rest) and, (b) a fifty-year cycle that will include seven sabbatical years plus one jubilee year. In each fifty-year period years 7, 14, 21, 28, 35, 42 and 49 will be sabbatical years.

From the aforesaid it would be fair to say that God in effect divided the Jewish calendar into fifty-year cycles containing seven weeks of years (each week representing six working years plus one sabbatical or year of rest) plus one jubilee year. Leviticus 26:33-35 is a clear warning that God will scatter the Jews among the nations if they do not follow His instructions. One of these instructions was to observe and count as holy the institution of sabbaticals and jubilees. If they did not strictly keep all the sabbaths and the sabbaticals the land would lie desolate for all the sabbaths or sabbaticals they did not keep. The seventy years of exile may represent seventy sabbaticals not strictly observed.

The "sevens" or "weeks" of Daniel 9:24, in all probability, are periods or units of seven years each, i.e., sabbaticals. "Seventy sevens" then would mean 490 years ($70 \times 7 = 490$). If we should add a jubilee year after each seventh "sevens" the total period covered by the seventy "sevens" would be 500 years ($70 \times 7 + 10$ jubilees). In a way this makes sense although I have not yet found support for such exposition.

The next question would be whether we should take the 490 years literally or symbolically. The visions of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel prior to Gabriel's revelation are full of symbols which can only be explained if we regard them as such. However, Gabriel's message to Daniel contains nothing that can be regarded as symbolic. He

announces definite things to be accomplished, like the rebuilding of the Temple and the City, before an Anointed One (Messiah) will be rejected and a new covenant entered into, and when the Temple and the City will again be destroyed. For those expositors who believe that the seventy sevens should be interpreted in a symbolic manner, i.e. that it is not seventy literal weeks of years but rather seventy indefinite periods of time, the question is, why seventy sevens? Why not only one, two or three periods of time? Why such a specific time-period?

Stuart renders this “seventy sevens” as seventy times seven years on the grounds that the word denoting “weeks” in the Hebrew is not *shabuim*, but *shabuot*. He says,

The form, which is used here, which is a regular masculine plural, is no doubt purposely chosen to designate the plural of seven; and with great propriety here, inasmuch as there are many sevens which are to be joined together in one common sum. Daniel had been meditating on the close of the seventy “years” of Hebrew exile, and the angel now discloses to him a new period of “seventy times seven,” in which still more important events are to take place. Seventy sevens, or (to use the Greek phraseology), “seventy heptades,” are determined upon thy people. Heptades of what? Of days, or of years? No one can doubt what the answer is. Daniel had been making diligent search respecting the seventy “years;” and, in such a connection, nothing but seventy heptades of years could be reasonably supposed to be meant by the angel.^{54b}

According to Stuart it means seventy sevens of “years,” or 490 years.

This is what other commentators say:

*Weeks not of days, but of years, or, seventy times seven years, that is, four hundred and ninety years - Benson.*⁷⁶

*There is no difference between us and the Jews in numbering the years; they confess the number of years to be 490 - Calvin.*⁶⁸

*The 70 years foretold by Jeremiah are to be understood as 70 weeks of years (i.e. 490 years) - Cambridge Bible.*⁶⁹

The Jews had Sabbatic years, Leviticus 25:8, by which their years were divided into weeks of years, as in this important prophecy, each week

containing seven years. The seventy weeks therefore here spoken of amounts to four hundred and ninety years - Clarke.⁷⁰

The conception, as we have seen, would come to readers quite naturally, since Shabbath meant in Hebrew, not only the seventh day of the week but the seventh year in each week of years. Hence "seventy weeks" means four hundred and ninety years - Expositor's Bible.⁷¹

He alludes to Jeremiah's prophecy, who prophesied that their captivity would be seventy years: but now God's mercy would exceed his judgment seven times as much, which would be 490 years, even until the coming of Christ, and so then it would continue forever - Geneva.⁷²

...and this space of "seventy" weeks is not to be understood of weeks of days; which is too short a time for the fulfillment of so many events as are mentioned; nor were they fulfilled within such a space of time; but of weeks of years and make up four hundred and ninety years - Gill.⁷³

The context points to years. "Seventy sevens" of years, i.e., 490 years, are decreed upon Israel and the city of Jerusalem is the sense of the first phrase of this verse - Gray.⁷⁴

The seventy weeks mean a day for a year or 490 years - Matthew Henry.⁷⁵

The fair translation would be, weeks seventy are determined; that is, seventy times seven days, or four hundred and ninety 'days - Barnes.⁶⁷

Seventy weeks—namely, of years; literally, "Seventy sevens"; seventy heptads or hebdomads; four hundred ninety years; expressed in a form of "concealed definiteness - Jamieson.⁷⁷

In the light of all that has been said thusfar I support, with many other excellent and renowned expositors, the notion that the seventy sevens mean 490 literal years.

THY PEOPLE

There can be no doubt that the people of Daniel are the descendants of Abraham through Jacob. Just before Gabriel interrupted Daniel's prayer he cried out,

*O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies' sake. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God, because **thy city** and **thy people** are called by thy name. (Dan 9:18-19 ASV)*

The one who is announcing this prophecy is the Angel Gabriel and he addresses Daniel, a Jew, saying **your** people, i.e. Daniel's people and it is definitely not the "church" or "God's people in general" as those who believe in replacement theology would confess. (Replacement theology basically tells us that God is done with Israel and that the Christian church is its complete replacement). Walvoord has this to say about the phrase "your people and your city":

A very important aspect of the prophecy given at the start is that the period of time in question relates to "thy people" and "thy holy city." Even in ruins, Jerusalem remains the city set apart in the heart of God (cf. 9:20) and Daniel shared this love for the city which is central in God's program for His kingdom both in the past and the future. Unlike the prophecies of Daniel 2, 7, and 8, which primarily related to the Gentiles, this chapter is specifically God's program for the people of Israel, as Daniel would obviously interpret it. To make this equivalent to the church composed of both Jews and Gentiles is to read into the passage something foreign to the whole thinking of Daniel. The church as such has no relation to the city nor to the promises given specifically to Israel relating to their restoration and repossession of the land.⁵⁸

THY HOLY CITY

This is, without doubt, a reference to physical Jerusalem, the city of David which was the capital city of the Southern kingdom in which King Solomon built the Temple.

PURPOSE OF TIME SET ASIDE

In the "general" statement of verse 24 the Angel announces that in the plan of God there is a definite time set aside during which the predictions Gabriel made would be accomplished; that is, a period of

time during which all that was to be done in reference to the holy city, or in the holy city, would be enacted. The things specified in verse 24 are “what was to be done,” as detailed more particularly in verses 25 to 27. The design in this verse seems to have been to furnish a “general” statement of what was to occur in regard to the holy city - of that city which had been selected for the particular purpose of being a place where atonement was to be made for human transgression.⁶⁷ The time set aside is seventy sevens or weeks which would be 490 years.

It is important to note that when Daniel interceded for his people in prayer, he did not inquire into the ultimate events which would occur in Jerusalem. He simply prayed that the purpose of God, as prophesied by Jeremiah with regard to the captivity of the nation, and the rebuilding of the city and temple, might be accomplished. However, God, in His ultimate wisdom, not only gave him the assurance that Jeremiah's prophecy would be fulfilled but He also revealed to Daniel, in a remarkable manner, His complete plan regarding the city of David, the city in which the greatest event that changed the destiny of mankind would take place, an event that would forever characterise Jerusalem among the cities of the world.

Judah was about to be released from their exile in Babylon, and they would be allowed to return to the holy land had they wanted to. We should remember that not all the Jews were willing to go to the land of their fathers. They had been in Babylon for many years and many of them were born there, their knowledge of their home country was by then based on hearsay and on stories conveyed by the elders of the community. Many of the original exiles had by then also died in Babel and many of the exiles became prosperous in their businesses making them reluctant to abandon all they have achieved in exchange for an uncertain future in a devastated land.

Gabriel announced six major things that had to be accomplished in the 490 years. These are:

1. Finish the transgression;
2. Make an end of sins;
3. Make reconciliation for iniquity;
4. Bring in everlasting righteousness;
5. Seal up the vision and prophecy, and
6. Anoint the most Holy.

FINISH THE TRANSGRESSION

Bringing an end to man's rebellion against God. The Hebrew word "*kalah*" translated as *finish*, also means "to restrain" or "to shut up". The idea is to disarm this "thing" that drives mankind to rebel against God. Transgression comes from the Hebrew word "*pashah*" which means a revolt (national, moral or religious) - rebellion, sin, transgression, trespass. The sinful nature of the Jewish people caused them to constantly test the boundaries of the Law and therefore their history speaks of constant and continued rebellion against God and His law.

No matter how much the daily, weekly and yearly sacrifices gave them forgiveness for sins committed since the last sacrifice, they did not give them the ability to get rid of the hold that sin had over them. No matter how hard they then might have tried, they just could not reach the point where sin was not in control of their lives. Now, says Gabriel, God has set aside 490 years in which He will prepare them to finally turn to God.

The word restrain, however, will be a better translation as the whole passage is about the Messiah and what would be done during the appointed "seventy weeks," though the meaning here is not that Messiah would "finish transgression" but that He would do a work which would restrain iniquity in the world. Better still, He would do something that will "shut it up," enclose it as one imprisoned, and so that transgression would no longer be able to have unrestraint sway over man. People will be equipped with the ability to say no to sin, as the Law will then be written on their hearts and their former rebellious nature, through the power of the Spirit, will be brought under control. It will be completely dealt with when the Messiah presents Himself as the final and ultimate sacrifice to God.

MAKE AN END OF SIN

The Hebrew word "*chatham*" means to seal, affix a seal or seal up. To *make an end of sins* is not what is meant in this passage. The correct translation would be, according to most scholars, *to seal up sin*. Job. 14:17 (KJV) says, "*My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity*". It implies to remove something from sight or remove it from view. They are concealed, hidden, close up – as the contents of a

letter or package are sealed, indicating that no one is to examine them. We who have been saved by grace understand how God removes sin through the blood of the Lamb, and treats it as if it is hidden from view.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isa. 1:18 ASV)

He seals it with a seal that may not be broken (Heb.1:3, Heb.9:26, Heb. 10:12 & 17).

MAKE RECONCILIATION FOR INIQUITY

The Hebrew word “*kaphar*” in its root form means “*to cover*”. It also means “*to pardon*” or “*make atonement*”. The proper phrase would be “*to cover iniquity*” and in the general sense it means “*to pardon or forgive*.” Jesus Christ made atonement for us when He took our sins and transgressions upon Himself to die on a Roman cross. Thank God, our sins are forgiven and in Christ Jesus, we are a new creation! Even our water baptism is the symbol of how our sins were “*covered/buried*” (Rom. 5:10, 2Cor. 5:19, Eph. 2:16, Heb. 2:17).

The first three phrases dealt with sin which will be restrained, sealed up and covered over.

BRING IN EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS

The phrase “*to bring in*” - literally, “*to cause to come*” - refers to some direct agency by which righteousness would be introduced into the world and as such this righteousness would be everlasting. In contrast to the above which was all about sin that would be restrained, sealed up and covered over, the statement here is that a method would be introduced by which man would be able to become righteous and holy before God. The only one who would be able to bring this about would be one who already had everlasting righteousness. Therefore, it is without a doubt that this refers to the Messiah. Jesus replaced our former unrighteousness with everlasting righteousness through His

finished work on the cross (Gal 3:27, 1 Cor 1:30, 2Cor. 5:21, Rom. 5:17, Col. 1:22, Eph. 5:27).

SEAL UP THE VISION AND PROPHECY

The vision and the prophecy will be sealed up, i.e., to ratify and confirm the prophets' predictions. The expression is derived from the custom of affixing a seal to a document, in order to guarantee its genuineness. The Bible in Basic English renders the phrase "*so that the vision and the word of the prophet may be stamped as true,*" and the Good News Bible reads, "*so that the vision and the prophecy will come true*". In plain English, it means that the contents of the vision and the prophecy of Daniel will be completely fulfilled.

Nothing will be outstanding that have not been fulfilled. To seal the vision and prophecy also implies that the LORD God has placed His stamp of authority on it. Therefore, it will be certain to come to pass. Nothing can stop it from happening. Now, more than 2500 years later we know for certain that the prophecy was fully fulfilled.

ANOINT THE MOST HOLY

Scholars render a great variety of interpretations of this expression. The Hebrew word *mashach*, translated "anoint," also means smear, anoint or paint. In its primitive root, it indicates to rub with oil, i.e., to anoint and by implication to consecrate. It is commonly used with reference to a sacred rite, to anoint, or consecrate with ointment, or anointing to an office or use as, for example, a priest (Ex. 28:41, 40:15); a prophet (1Kings 19:16, Isa 61:1); a king (1Sam 10:1, 15:1, 2Sam 2:4, 1Kings 1:34). It is also used to consecrate a future sacred place (Gen 31:13); or vases and vessels as consecrated to God (Ex. 40:9-11, Lev. 8:11, Nu. 7:1). Oil or any lubricant that was prepared according to a specified rule, was commonly used for this purpose.

In a figurative sense, the word may be used to indicate the setting apart, consecration or dedication of someone or something to a holy practice "without" the use of oil. Such was the consecration or appointment of Jesus, the Holy One of Israel, to be the Prophet, Priest, and King of mankind.

(God) ...hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds.
(Heb 1:2 ASV)

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus. (Heb 3:1 ASV)

The apostle Peter declares:

...Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power... (Acts 10:38 ASV)

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read:

...Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. (Heb. 1:9 ASV)

In fact, “anointed” is exactly what Maschiach (Hebrew), Khristos (Greek), Christ (English) means.

The Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary states about the phrase,

...to anoint the Most Holy" that it is "primarily, to 'anoint,' or to consecrate after its pollution 'the Most Holy' place but mainly Messiah, the antitype to the Most Holy place (Joh 2:19-22). The propitiatory in the temple (the same Greek word expresses the mercy seat and propitiation, Ro 3:25), which the Jews looked for at the restoration from Babylon, shall have its true realization only in Messiah. For it is only when sin is 'made an end of' that God's presence can be perfectly manifested.

We have seen what the purpose of the determined 490 year period was and what would have been achieved at the end of this period. We can also conclude that the 490 years that was set aside, seen from a Christian perspective, was to finalise the preparations for the dawn of the greatest event in the history of mankind.

We now move on to Daniel 9 verses 25 through 27, the subject of countless books, commentaries and articles written over centuries. It literally triggered the fascination of thousands of Bible scholars, students of theology, ministers of churches, evangelists, teachers, preachers and whatever you want to call them, all trying to discover the exact truth contained in its words. It caused the invention of many

theories and interpretations, and to such an extent that it may be said that these three verses in Daniel have been misinterpreted, even distorted and abused, by many God-fearing and sincere followers of Jesus Christ throughout the history of Christianity.

I sincerely believe that these men and women all had the intention to, through their work, glorify our God and heavenly Father. We can, as so often happens, split hairs on little things yet in the process forgetting that in the greater scheme of things it does not really make a difference. Our only goal should be, I believe, to seek and show how our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is revealed in this vision and so that we can glorify Him presenting Him to all the world in all His majesty, greatness and glory!

A COMMAND TO RESTORE AND RE-BUILD JERUSALEM

The New American Standard Version renders the beginning of verse 25 of our text as:

So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem..." while The King James Version reads: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem..."

The phrase "the going forth" is from the Hebrew word *motsa* which, according to Strong's,¹⁰⁹ means a place or act of going forth, to issue, export, a source or a spring. The Hebrew word translated as "decree" or "command" is *dabar*, which literally means "a word" such as when someone says something. In this case, the phrase undoubtedly refers to the communication of a decree, a command, an order or an instruction. However, there is nothing in the words that tells us who would give the command. The command could then equally have been issued by God, by a Persian king or any other person or body of authority.

We therefore have to look at the circumstances to determine to whom or what it refers. The natural understanding of the phrase is that it refers to a Persian monarch who would actually issue a command to restore and build the city of Jerusalem. The purpose of the phrase, however, is to designate a fixed and specific period or event that would be the beginning of the designated time of the prophecy, and this view is the only interpretation ascribing a definiteness to the phrase.

It is necessary to understand that if it were not the intention of God to let Daniel know when the 490-year period would begin, the Angel would probably not have used the explicit expression, "*from the going forth of the command...*". We also know that God nowhere issued a fixed command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. The only logical explanation then of the phrase is that it points to some explicit and definite order, namely to rebuild the city, and such an order could only have come from someone who, at that time had jurisdiction over Jerusalem and Judea. It would indeed be someone who could command the resources required for the rebuilding of the ruined city. Logically, since Judea and Jerusalem were under the jurisdiction of the Persian Empire at the time when Daniel saw the vision, by implication a legitimate order to restore and rebuild the city could only be issued by one of the Persian kings.

The King James Version, together with a number of other English Bibles renders the Hebrew word *dabar* as "of the commandment". Strong's define it as,

answer, appoint, bid, command, commune, declare, destroy, give. A primitive root; perhaps properly is, to arrange; but used figuratively (of words), to speak; rarely (in a destructive sense) to subdue – answer, appoint, bid, command, commune, declare, destroy, give, name, promise, pronounce, rehearse, say, speak, be spokesman, subdue, talk, teach, tell, think, use (as entreaties), utter.

The English translators, in their wisdom, thought it best to, gathered from all the possibilities, choose the word "command or commandment". I think it was not the best choice, and I am saying this because if someone receives a command from a king or a general to do something, it implies that the person who received the command, has no choice but to execute it on behalf of his commander. Disobedience to do so would certainly be punished. It would therefore have been more in line with the context of our text to render *dabar* as "from the going forth of a word, or from the time that permission was granted".

The phrase "to restore" comes from the Hebrew word *shub* which is a verb meaning to turn back or to return. Some readers might think that it is a reference to the return of the captives, and it is not necessarily wrong, but the command is given with reference to

Jerusalem and the basic meaning is, "to restore to its former splendour" or "to reinstate it in its former condition as a holy city".⁶⁷

Concerning "the going forth of a commandment" there are a few points that may be regarded as certain. Firstly, we know that the commandment or permission would be issued by someone who has the authority to issue such a command or to give such permission like a prince or a king whose wish will be respected and carried out. Secondly, the command would be to "restore and build Jerusalem". This is what the Angel specified. He clearly did not say anything about the building of the Temple and to say that he did – the one implied by the other - is to add words to the message of the Angel.

The rebuilding of the Temple posed no problem to those who reigned over Judea, but to restore Jerusalem to its former condition of strength and power might have been regarded as dangerous. It had cost Nebuchadnezzar much time and effort breaking through the fortifications of Jerusalem before he was able to conquer and subdue it. It would therefore be reasonable to assume that even Cyrus would have been sceptical giving permission for rebuilding and fortification of the city.

Therefore, permitting the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem would have been the same as giving them their independence and Cyrus clearly had no such thing in mind. The royal permission to rebuild the city would have, as a matter of fact, included the rebuilding of the Temple, however, permission to rebuild the Temple would not necessarily have implied including the rebuilding of the city as well.

FROM THE ISSUANCE OF A COMMAND UP TO AN ANOINTED ONE

Up until this stage the majority of expositors are in general agreement. From this point onward, however, it is necessary to pay closer attention to what the Angel said to Daniel and to dig deeper in our hope of finding a reasonable explanation of how and when the contents of the prophecy were fulfilled.

The Angel indicated that the beginning of the seventy sevens would be the issuing of a command, decree or word. Now he further indicated that an anointed one would appear, however, a specific

number of sevens would pass by before he would make his appearance known. To complicate things a little more the Angel also mentions one period of seven sevens, equal to 49 years, and another of sixty-two sevens, equal to 434 years. The question, therefore, is whether the time that will elapse between the beginning of the seventy sevens period and the appearance of an anointed one is 49 years or 49 years plus 434 years giving a total of 483 years.

I have compared twenty-seven English Bible translations⁸⁰ of this verse and twenty-four of them directly imply the combination of the seven and sixty-two weeks for a total of sixty-nine weeks, equal to 483 years. The other three⁸¹ implies that the time from the start of the seventy sevens up until the anointed one will be seven sevens, equal to 49 years after which Jerusalem and the land will be restored for sixty-two sevens, equal to 434 years.

Considering the aforesaid well, it is necessary to take a closer look at the translation of the phrase under view in the popular English Standard Version:

Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks, it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

If one attempts to interpret the ESV literally it makes no sense at all, for then Gabriel would have said that it would take 434 years to build the squares and moat. Nehemiah 6:15 says the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, which, according to The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, would be September 444 B.C.

The ESV bases its English rendering of this verse on the Masoretic text of the original Hebrew manuscripts. By a long tradition, a ritual *Sefer Torah* (Torah scroll) could contain only the Hebrew consonantal text with nothing added and nothing taken away. The Masoretic codices, however, provide extensive additional material, called masorah, to show correct pronunciation and cantillation, protect against scribal errors, and annotating possible (probable) variants.

The Masoretic manuscripts, therefore, include vowel points, pronunciation marks and stress accents in the text, short annotations in the side margins, and longer more extensive notes in the upper and

lower margins and collected at the end of each book. These notes were added between the ninth and tenth centuries because the Masoretes recognised the possibility of human error in copying the Hebrew Bible.

However, the Masoretes were not working with the original Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible and corruptions had by then already crept into the versions they were copying. One of the accents the Masoretes added to the Masorah, is an "athnach," an arrow under the accented syllable which marks the logical division of the verse. The accent, in this case, was placed between the two time phrases "seven weeks" and "sixty-two weeks". The ESV translators felt that this Masoretic accent justified placing a period at the end of "seven weeks" beginning another sentence to which they added the word "then".

Again, if we read the ESV literally, we are forced to interpret Daniel 9:25 as a reference to an anointed one, a prince, as coming on the scene after seven weeks (49 years), an interpretation which clearly excludes the interpretation of the anointed one as a reference to the Messiah.

Reliance on the ESV forces one into a non-messianic interpretation of one of several historically possible individuals, such as King Cyrus, Zerubbabel or Joshua, the post-exilic high priest. In doing so, these commentators are forced to interpret the second anointed one in Daniel 9:26 as a reference to Onias III, a Jewish high priest who was displaced and then killed (cut off) about 171 B.C. during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.). It is therefore not surprising that the liberal, critical school of interpretation follows this line of reasoning, many of this school also reasoning that the book of Daniel was written some time in between 200 and 100 B.C. after the events had taken place historically.

The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (Septuagint or LXX) which is an older manuscript than the Masoretic additions, does not support the translation of this text in the ESV. The Septuagint text reads, "...until Christ the prince there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks" (Brenton's English Translation). The Greek reading allows for the interpretation of consecutive time periods which demands a Messianic interpretation.

We can thus undoubtedly say that the Angel gave Daniel a very clear indication of when the 490 year period will begin – the point in time when a command would be given to restore and build Jerusalem. He also clearly indicated that the total span of the seventy sevens would

be divided into three periods. The first period will be seven sevens (49 years), the second sixty-two sevens (434 years), and the third will be one seven, equal to 7 years. We also deduce from his conversation with Daniel, that the end of the second period will be marked by the appearance of an anointed one. We should take note that the command to restore Jerusalem will be given to Daniel's people, the exiled Jews in Babylon.

During this time Jerusalem will be restored, that is, it will physically be rebuilt. The city's wall and its streets will also again be reconstructed. The rebuilding of the city necessarily includes the people who will be restored as a nation. The 69 weeks of years or 483 years, in short, is the time that will elapse before the anointed prince will make his appearance in the city of Jerusalem. The Temple and the city will be restored, but it will not be easy. They can expect and should prepare themselves for troublesome times.

At this stage we still need to find the decree or command given to rebuild the city and determine who the anointed prince is who will appear after the 69 sevens have elapsed. From what I have found in my research, it seems that a large number of prominent expositors believe that the anointed prince referred to here is the Messiah, known to us as Jesus the Christ, however, for the sake of clarity a closer look at the text is necessary.

As pointed out previously, and just to recap, the Hebrew adjective *maschiach* occurs frequently in the Old Testament and it is uniformly translated "anointed" except in Daniel 9:25, 26. The word is applied to priests, prophets and kings who were set apart for their offices by a solemn act of anointing. As far as the language in this vision of Daniel is concerned, it may be applied to anyone who would hold the position of priest, prophet or king and the proper application must therefore be determined from the context in which the word is applied here. Since all that the language conveys is "until an anointed one," the who this anointed one will be must then necessarily be determined from other circumstances than the mere usage of language. It would be fair to assume that the one referred to as "an anointed" would be someone who by way of his stature, be recognised and regarded as anointed by God; someone who would occupy such an important part in history that the Angel regards it necessary to mention the time of his appearance.

The Hebrew noun *nagid* properly means a leader, a ruler or a prince and it can be applied to any prince, civil or military leader, any one of royal dignity. The word is equally applicable to the Messiah as to any other leader. All that can, however, be deduced from our text is that it would be some prominent leader; someone that would be known without any definite designation; someone to whom, when he appears on the scene, such designation would be applied without hesitation and without difficulty.

As said before, most of the Christian interpreters have supposed that the phrase *maschiach nagid* is Jesus the Messiah, the promised one through whom God would offer salvation to all the world. In support of this interpretation, the following may be taken note of:

(a) There is nothing in the language itself that prohibits its applicability to Jesus the Messiah, (b) In Isaiah 45:1 God calls Cyrus His anointed and as such many have suggested that he is the one referred to in our text, (c) However, in Isaiah 45:1 the term is directly applied to Cyrus whereas in Da. 9:25 and 26 there is no one directly linked to the term, (d) In the case of Cyrus, God chose (anointed) him, i.e., consecrated, ordained and set him apart for a specific task namely, to let His people go back to their land.

In our text (Da. 9:25) two specific points in time are expressed by the Angel, i.e., (i) the point in time when the seventy sevens will begin the issuance of a command and (ii) another point in time, i.e., when an anointed prince will appear.

If Cyrus is the one who issued the command, then he cannot be the anointed prince who is destined to appear at a later stage. We know that Cyrus issued his decree to allow the exiles to go back to Judea and rebuild the Temple in about 536 B.C. We also know that he had died long before even the first period of 49 years came to an end, and he certainly did not appear as an anointed prince 483 years after he issued his command!

Furthermore, the anointed one of Da. 9:25 is the same person as the anointed one in Da. 9:26, and the Angel further made it clear that after threescore and two weeks (62 weeks) the anointed one would be cut off, which confirms that the anointed prince would not appear after the first week (49 years), but he would make his appearance **after** seven plus sixty-two weeks, that is, after a period of 69 weeks which equals

483 years. So we at least know that the anointed prince whom the Angel said was going to appear cannot be King Cyrus of Isaiah 45:1.

(b) The Jewish writer Bronner says -

The belief in a Messiah is the supreme expression of the Jewish spirit, enabling the Jewish people to endure all the trials and tribulations throughout the ages. The concept of the Messianic Age endows life with perspective, lends purpose to history, and offers hope to humanity. This hope for a Messiah projects toward the final goal in history when a new era will be ushered in, warfare will be banished from the earth, and peace will reign supreme. It is permeated with an aura of hope and redemption for Israel and humanity," and continuing with, "...belief in the Messiah has been described as the most glistening jewel in the glorious crown of Judaism. It was the comforting and uplifting faith in the Messiah which sustained the Jews through their long and torturous march through history.⁷

In the time of the Babylonian exile, a time when the people of God lost their land, their independence and their self-esteem, one would expect that their longing for a Messiah who would bring them back to the land of their fathers and restoring them to their former glory would have grown stronger as time went by. At the time of Daniel's vision, they would have been accustomed to look forward to a great prince and deliverer, who would by way of his stature, be the Anointed of God.

Unless there was some limitation or a specific designation in the language of our text, and we have seen that there is not, they would have naturally applied it to the Messiah of their expectation.

THE ANOINTED ONE

I propose that the anointed one in our text is Jesus the Son of God. The question under consideration now is: When is the "unto" and can it be determined? Two very important events in the earthly life of Jesus Christ are (a) His baptism by John the Baptist when the Spirit of God descended on Him, God anointing Him with His Holy Spirit and (b) His triumphant entry into Jerusalem as King of Israel.

Although scholars are divided on which one of these events are applicable to the "unto an anointed one", my personal opinion is that it does not really matter as both events support the main theme of the Angel's announcement, namely to bring to Daniel's attention that seven plus sixty-two weeks of years were going to expire before the Messiah will make His appearance. In the light of what I have said concerning the uncertainty that exist in the various chronologies of ancient nations as well as the different methods they applied to calculate time, we should be careful how we interpret the Old Testament prophecies, especially trying to determine the outcome thereof by applying a specific year or date thereto.

CHRONOLOGY OF JESUS'S LIFE ON EARTH

The gospels do not claim to provide a complete chronological list of every event in the life of Jesus. They were written as a testimony, serving as theological documents in the context of early Christianity rather than historical chronicles. Their authors showed little interest in an absolute chronology of Jesus or in synchronising the episodes of his life with the secular history of the age. However, the gospels left us with some details regarding events which can be clearly dated. In these cases, one can establish date ranges regarding major events in Jesus's life by comparing them with other independent sources such as Jewish, Greek and Roman sources which have frequently been used in historical analyses of the chronology of Jesus.

Virtually all modern historians agree that Jesus existed, regarding his baptism and his crucifixion as historical events and assuming that approximate ranges for these events can be estimated. Having said that, scholars mostly assume that Jesus was born between 6 and 4 B.C., that He began preaching around 27–29 and that His ministry lasted for one to three years. They furthermore calculate Jesus's death as having taken place between 30 and 36.

BAPTISM AND ANOINTING OF JESUS THE

MESSIAH

It is also widely accepted that the ministry of Jesus began with His baptism and that it was at His baptism that He was anointed. Luke records it as follows:

...and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "You are my Son, whom I love. I am pleased with you! (Luke 3:22 NIV)

In the house of Cornelius, Peter declares,

...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all those who were oppressed by the Devil, for God was with Him. (Acts 10:38 NASB)

From Luke 3:22 we know that Jesus was about thirty years old when He began to teach, and we also know that the law required one to have reached the age of at least 30 years before he could be installed in the office as priest (Nu. 4). Jesus said, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is near*" (Mark 1:15 NET Bible).

What time is fulfilled? It certainly would be the time covering the period before He appeared as the Messiah of God - the end of the 69 week period.

Jesus was baptized in the fifteenth year of the reign of Caesar Tiberius – Luke 3:1. Barnes⁶⁷ says that this was the thirteenth year of Tiberius's sole reign as emperor. For the first two years of Caesar Tiberius's reign he was joint emperor with Augustus Caesar. Luke calculates the eighteenth year of Caesar Tiberius's reign from the time he was officially acknowledged as co-regent of Augustus Caesar.

From Roman history we can gather that Caesar Tiberius became sole emperor in A.D. August 14. By adding his 13 years as sole emperor to A.D. 14 we arrive at A.D. 27. Some scholars do not agree with Barnes rejecting the theory of a two-year co-regency for Tiberius. According to them Jesus's baptism took place in A.D. 28/29 depending on what system is used to determine the year of his accession.

The question is: If Jesus were 30 years old when He was baptised by John, how can it be that He was baptised in A.D. 27? The reason lies with Roman scholar and theologian Dionysius Exiguus who is best

known for his compilation of a calendar that produced the modern Gregorian calendar. From his calendar stems the designations “B.C.” and “A.D.” Dionysius, for some unknown reason incorrectly calculated the year of Jesus's birth. Both ancient and modern scholars placed this event now sometime between 6 and 2 B.C. Therefore, if Jesus were baptised at age 30, His birth took place in 3 B.C.

Although the calculation of dates and times is captivating, we should not forget that the core value of Daniel's vision does not necessarily lie in the calculation of precise dates and times but rather in what is accomplished within the time span of this prophecy. Gabriel made it clear to Daniel that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, will come, but not in his lifetime. Daniel was also shown that Jesus, the King of kings, would be rejected by His own people.

TRIUMPHANT ENTRY OF JESUS INTO JERUSALEM

¹As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.” ⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ⁵“Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” ⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna! to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna d in the highest heaven!”¹⁰When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” ¹¹The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” (Math. 21:1-11 NIV)

No one can deny that this was indeed a remarkable event in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. He was on his way to Jerusalem knowing that the time had come for Him to pay the highest price for the redemption of mankind. While the crowd acknowledged His majesty, spreading garments and branches from trees on the road before Him shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David" and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly. However, He still had to do one important thing: He had to clean the House of God which the people had defiled.

At this moment He accepted and took upon Himself all the glory, power and authority given to Him by His God whereupon He went into the Temple, boldly exercising His authority by casting out all who were busy trading in the Temple, overthrowing the tables of the money-changers and the chairs of those who were selling sacrificial doves. He knew all to well that within a few days He would be the King of all kings, the Lord of all lords fulfilling the office of the everlasting High Priest and accepting the divine role of Mediator between God His Father and all the people who would accept salvation in His Name. Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the subsequent cleansing of the temple had happened a few days before he ate the Passover with His disciples.

The gospels do not tell how long Jesus's ministry lasted. Matthew, Mark and Luke record only one Passover during the ministry of Jesus – the one that preceded His death and resurrection. John talks about the Passover three times – John 2:13, 6:4 and 11:55-57, and some scholars use these references to prove that Jesus's ministry must have been going on for at least three years. The John 2:13 account of the Passover includes an act of Jesus cleansing the Temple which is almost identical to what He did right after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The question, therefore, is if Jesus cast out the Temple merchants on two occasions or did John duplicate the event early in his gospel to illustrate Jesus's authority?

Since the gospels do not tell us in which year Jesus was crucified, scholars have used various methods to try and fix the date of this gruesome event in the life of Jesus Christ. However, an indisputable answer has yet to be found. At best we are working with scholarly assumed dates of anything between A.D. 27 and A.D. 36. In any case,

not knowing the exact date of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ should in no way affect how we value the great work of salvation, brought about by Jesus's death and resurrection.

Before I proceed to determine when the command to build and restore Jerusalem went out, I would like to dwell on the third and last event of Daniel 9:25.

JERUSALEM SHALL BE BUILT AGAIN

The Angel said that the city, Jerusalem, would be built again. This is a general statement of fact, meaning it **will** be done, however, the statement made by the Angel, does not contain any special reference to the "time" when it would take place. It seems that the Angel wanted to give Daniel the assurance that the walls and streets of Jerusalem would be built again also that it would happen sometime during the seven and sixty-two weeks (483 years) period.

Whether it would be in the first 49 years or during the 434-year period, is not exactly clear. However, the 490-year period began with the command to rebuild Jerusalem, and one can presume that the actual restoration of the city would have begun as soon as possible after the issuance of the command. It would be reasonable then to suppose that the restoration of the city would fall within the first period, the forty-nine years.

The Hebrew word translated as "street" is *rechob* meaning a broad open place such as a plaza and it would therefore be properly applied to a wide street, a market-place or a forum like the broad open place at the gates of Oriental cities where public trials were held and produce sold. In this case, it is used to denote that the city will be restored to its former condition.

The Hebrew word translated as "wall" is *charats* and it too has various meanings. It is derived from the word *charats* which literally means, to cut in, or dig out. The word is translated as "sharp-pointed things" (Job 41:30), "gold, fine gold, choice gold" (Psa. 68:13; Pro. 3:14; 8:10, 8:19; 16:16; Zec. 9:3), "a threshing instrument" (Isa. 28:27; Amos 1:3), sharp (referring to a threshing instrument, Isa. 41:15), "wall," (Da. 9:25) and "decision" (Joel 3:14). The notion of "gold" as connected with the word, is probably derived from digging as is the case with gold, and therefore eagerly sought by men. Gesenius¹⁰⁸ supposes that, in the

text under discussion, it means a “ditch or trench” of a fortified city. Many walled cities had a deep ditch or trench around them in order to make things difficult for an approaching enemy. In our current lexical application, the wording signifies the rebuilding of a city.

Even in troublous times, or "in time of distress", translated from the Hebrew word *tsoq*, the meaning points to a period of trouble, perplexity and distress. The reference here is without doubt to times that would be characterised by trouble, perplexity, and distress. From the original text we can then infer the rebuilding of the city which effort will elicit strong opposition. In other words, the task of rebuilding the city will not be easy. The fulfilment of this part of Daniel's vision is properly covered in the book of Nehemiah.

Thus, the rebuilding of the city started in 457 B.C. ending after 49 years which brings us to 408 B.C. The prophecy also states that it would be troublesome times. Nehemiah gives an account of some of the troubles they encountered during the physical rebuilding of the wall.

Now the long wait, 62 weeks or 434 years, and this is the time between the last prophet of the Old Testament, Malachi, and the beginning of Jesus's ministry after His baptism in the river Jordan. During these 400+ years God did not send a prophet like He did in the past to the Jews. It was a time of famine for the Word of God.

Behold, the days come, says the Lord Jehovah, that I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the Words of Jehovah. (Amos 8:11 ASV)

It is interesting to note that Exodus 12:40 says the children of Israel had dwelt 430 years in Egypt before Moses led them out of captivity. In the same way, after 434 years, God sent His Son to offer Israel freedom from their bondage. If only they would have accepted Him.

In retrospect, during this 62-week period or 434 years, the remainder of the Persian era came to an end, likewise the entire Greek era came and went, and, in this very same crucial historical era, the first part of Roman ascent was strongly felt. Also, the ungodly rule of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Jewish revolt, led by Judas Maccabees falls within this restless period.

WHEN WAS THE COMMAND TO RESTORE AND BUILD GIVEN?

It is now necessary to discuss in greater detail the time in history when a command went out, that is to restore and build Jerusalem, covering a 490-year period and when the vision began to unfold. On this point alone a variety of opinions have been suggested and debated by one and all who tried to make sense of Daniel's vision. To come to a fair interpretation of the words of the Angel,

...that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks,

We have to prove that such a command did indeed go forth from a Persian prince or king. It would therefore be proper to inquire what are the facts that history has preserved for us, although we also have to realise that the recorded history of the ancient world is not as clear as one would have liked it to be. Naturally we will have to make room for some degree of flexibility here, especially when it comes to the determination of so-called "fixed" historical dates.

Ptolemy identified ten Persian kings who reigned, in total, for a period of two-hundred-and-seven years, from Cyaxares II to the time when the Persian Empire was conquered by Alexander the Great. In his chronology, Ptolemy omitted those kings who did not reign for a full year, referring to the months of their reign partly to the preceding, and partly to the succeeding monarch. Jahn,³⁰ who used Ptolemy's canon, identified 14 kings as follows:

1. 538 Cyaxares II (the Darius of Daniel 6). He reigned for two years.
2. 536 Cyrus the Great who reigned as sole monarch over Medo-Persia for seven years.
3. 529 Cambyses the son of Cyrus who reigned for seven years and five months.
4. 522 Bardiya also known as Smerdis, a usurper, occupied the throne for about seven months.
5. 521 Darius I - Darius the Great who reigned for thirty-six years.
6. 485 Xerxes I followed him and reigned for twenty-one years.
7. 464 Artaxerxes I Longimanus had a lengthy reign of forty years and three months.

8. 424 Xerxes II, the son of Artaxerxes I, reigned for only forty-five days before he was assassinated by his brother Sogdianus.
9. 424 Sogdianus also known as Artabanes occupied the throne for seven months before he, in turn, was assassinated by Darius II.
10. 423 Darius II (Nothus) managed to reign for nineteen years.
11. 404 Artaxerxes II (Mnemon) kept the throne for forty-six years.
12. 358 Darius Ochus, also known, as Artaxerxes III reigned for twenty-one years.
13. 337 Artaxerxes IV (Arses) reigned for two years and rumour has it that he was poisoned.
14. 335 Darius III Codomanus the last king of Persia reigned for four years.

In the Bible, we read four times of orders/commands, decrees, letters or a word issued by the kings of Persia with regard to the building of the Temple and the City.

They are:

1. Ezra 1 – a proclamation in writing from Cyrus.
2. Ezra 6 – a decree by Darius to resume the restoration of the Temple.
3. Ezra 7 – a decree by Artaxerxes I issued in the seventh year of his reign.
4. Neh. 2 – an order by Artaxerxes I in his twentieth year to allow Nehemiah to build the walls of Jerusalem.

For information concerning the above orders or commands, we have to consult the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is generally believed that Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book, that more than one author contributed to its contents and that the chronicler of Chronicles I and II edited and compiled the books.

Although it is not in the scope of this study to entertain an exegetical analysis of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, I do acknowledge that the order of events as penned by the chronicler does not always follow one after the other in a strict logical manner, a problem that caused many discussions and produced plentiful books and articles. For this study I made use, in my view, of what seems to me,

the most logical explanations of a variety of writers if and when it is needed to throw light on Daniel's vision under discussion.

EDICT OF CYRUS

The edict published by Cyrus the Great is one that is carefully specified:

Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:2-4 ASV)

The First Book of Esdras renders the decree of Cyrus as follows:

Thus says Cyrus king of the Persians: The Lord of Israel, the Lord Most High, has made me king of the world, and he has commanded me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judea. If any of you, therefore, are of his people, may your Lord be with you; go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judea, and build the house of the Lord of Israel – he is the Lord who dwells in Jerusalem – and let each of you, wherever you may live, be helped by the people of your place with gold and silver, with gifts and with horses and cattle, besides the other things added as votive offerings for the temple of the Lord that is in Jerusalem. (New Revised Standard Version)

Batten, after addressing the numerous problems encountered in the text of the book of Ezra and taking into account various other manuscripts and historical documents, renders the decree of Cyrus as follows:

All the kingdoms of the world have Yahweh the God of heaven given me, and he has charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah: therefore whoever wills of all the people of Yahweh the God of

Israel, he is the God whose abode is in Jerusalem, now let him go up and build the house of Yahweh his God. And all that dwell in the places let them support him, and make free-will offerings to Yahweh, with silver and gold and with the free-will offerings for the house of God who is in Jerusalem.⁴

Cyrus was a Zoroastrian and it seems that his devotion to his god Marduk, in his inscription in the Cyrus Cylinder was added for political effect. The policy by which he proposed to rule the vast new dominions is clearly shown in his own words. On the Cylinder inscription, he wrote:

...the sanctuaries across the river Tigris – whose shrines had earlier become dilapidated, the gods who lived therein and made permanent sanctuaries for them. I collected together all of their people and returned them to their settlements, and the gods of the land of Sumer and Akkad which Nabonidus – to the fury of the lord of the gods – had brought into Shuanna, at the command of Marduk, the great lord, I returned them unharmed to their cells, in the sanctuaries that make them happy. May all the gods that I returned to their sanctuaries, every day before Marduk and Nabu, ask for a long life for me, and mention my good deeds, ..." Batten says that: "...this passage leaves no reason for doubt that (1) any foreign people colonised in Babylon could easily have gained permission to return to their own land; (2) that any such people could have obtained authority to rebuild any sanctuaries destroyed by the Babylonians; and (3) that any sacred objects plundered from the captured people, and resting as trophies in the temple at Babylon, would have been freely given back by Cyrus.⁶

It would be naive to think that Cyrus became a follower of the God of the Israelites – he acknowledged Yahweh as the God of the Jews and that His dwelling place is in Jerusalem. Cyrus had a strong belief that each nation had his own god and that it is only right that the different gods of the nations should be honoured in its own territory. Breneman says,

...Cyrus's consistent policy was to restore foreign cult centres destroyed by the Babylonians and to grant dispersed people's permission to return to their homelands. We have evidence of Persian support for the

*rebuilding of the Jewish temple at Elephantine (from the Elephantine texts), Cyrus's repairing of the Eanna temple at Uruk, and the Enunmah temple at Ur. Later, Cambyses authorized funds for the temple at Sais and the Amon temple at Hibis in Egypt.*⁵

There is no evidence that Cyrus forced the exiles to return to their fatherland. He was satisfied that he pleased Marduk, his god, by setting the exiles free to repatriate if they wanted to. There is also no evidence that he intended to give the repatriates political independence whatsoever. All he wanted to achieve was to allow them to build a sanctuary in which their god could dwell. He therefore explicitly told the Jews that Jehovah has charged him (Cyrus) to build him (Jehovah) a house in Jerusalem.

Those who reason that his decree necessarily includes the re-building of the city and walls read words and thoughts into Cyrus's intention that was based on his religious beliefs. If Cyrus had intended them to be independent, he would have allowed them to re-build the city and the walls. However, we do know that the re-build of the city did occur later at a different time and under the direction of different leaders.

It would seemingly be fair to say that the command referred to by the Angel was probably not the edict published by Cyrus. However, there are many who are adamant that this decree is the only legitimate one to consider and they consequently go to great lengths to explain why they believe it to be so.

As previously said, in modern times the world, in general, use the Gregorian calendar and this is why we notate ancient dates as before Christ or before the common era; this type of calendar calculations were made possible in large by an Egyptian astronomer, geographer and astrologer, Claudius Ptolemy's "Canon of the Kings."

Using Claudius Ptolemy's Canon of the Kings chronology, Cyrus became king of both Media and Persia in 536 B.C. Ezra 1 says that in his first year, that is, 536 B.C., Cyrus wrote his decree to allow the Jews to build a Temple for Jehovah in Jerusalem. Should we subtract sixty-nine "weeks" (483 years) from 536 B.C., we come to 53 B.C. which cannot be reconciled with "unto an anointed one". This in itself then disqualifies Cyrus's decree, but the scholars who insist that Cyrus's decree is the one referred to by the Angel, believe, amongst other reasons, that Ptolemy's

chronology of the Persian Empire is not correct. For those who want to pursue this theory, I recommend the excellent book of Martin Anstey.²

DECREE BY DARIUS HYSTASPIS 520 B.C.

Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in its place. Moreover, I make a decree what ye shall do to these elders of the Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the River, expenses be given with all diligence unto these men, that they be not hindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for burnt-offerings to the God of heaven; also wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the word of the priests that are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail; that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savour unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons. Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let a beam be pulled out from his house, and let him be lifted up and fastened thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this: and the God that hath caused his name to dwell there overthrow all kings and peoples that shall put forth their hand to alter the same, to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with all diligence. (Ezra 6:7-12 KJV)

This decree was to finish the work on the **temple**. From Ezra 6:15 we know that the house – the temple – was indeed finished on the third day of the month Adar in the sixth year of Darius. The month Adar is the twelfth month of the Jewish year and it is about equivalent to part of our February and March. The sixth year of Darius would be about 516/5 B.C. Haggai (Hag 1:15) mentions that the work had been taken up on the 24th day of the sixth month (Elul = September) in the second year of Darius. It had therefore been going on for nearly four-and-a-half years, but the foundations had been laid twenty years previously, 536 B.C. (Ezra 3:8-13).

The first two decrees are about the **temple** and its reconstruction, however, Gabriel told Daniel that the command is to restore and build **Jerusalem**. So, it cannot be the first or the second decree.

The next two decrees, both by Artaxerxes Longimanus, are supported by two different views and both needs to be examined to establish the pros and cons of each. Artaxerxes delivered his first decree concerning Judea in the seventh year of his reign as king of Persia. (Ezra 7:11-26). Using the chronology of Ptolemy this decree was issued in about 458/7 B.C. Artaxerxes delivered his second decree in the twentieth year of his reign which will be about 445/4 B.C. (Neh. 2:1-8).

ARTAXERXES'S DECREE IN HIS 7TH YEAR 458 B.C.

¹¹ This is a copy of the letter King Artaxerxes had given to Ezra the priest, a teacher of the Law, a man learned in matters concerning the commands and decrees of the Lord for Israel: ¹²"Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, teacher of the Law of the God of heaven: Greetings. ¹³Now I decree that any of the Israelites in my kingdom, including priests and Levites, who volunteer to go to Jerusalem with you, may go. ¹⁴You are sent by the king and his seven advisers to inquire about Judah and Jerusalem with regard to the Law of your God, which is in your hand. ¹⁵Moreover, you are to take with you the silver and gold that the king and his advisers have freely given to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, ¹⁶together with all the silver and gold you may obtain from the province of Babylon, as well as the freewill offerings of the people and priests for the temple of their God in Jerusalem. ¹⁷With this money be sure to buy bulls, rams and male lambs, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings, and sacrifice them on the altar of the temple of your God in Jerusalem. ¹⁸You and your fellow Israelites may then do whatever seems best with the rest of the silver and gold, in accordance with the will of your God. ¹⁹Deliver to the God of Jerusalem all the articles entrusted to you for worship in the temple of your God. ²⁰And anything else needed for the temple of your God that you are responsible to supply, you may provide

from the royal treasury. ²¹Now I, King Artaxerxes, decree that all the treasurers of Trans-Euphrates are to provide with diligence whatever Ezra the priest, the teacher of the Law of the God of heaven, may ask of you— ²²up to a hundred talents of silver, a hundred cors of wheat, a hundred baths of wine, a hundred baths of olive oil, and salt without limit. ²³Whatever the God of heaven has prescribed, let it be done with diligence for the temple of the God of heaven. Why should his wrath fall on the realm of the king and of his sons? ²⁴You are also to know that you have no authority to impose taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers at this house of God. ²⁵And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God, which you possess, appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice to all the people of Trans-Euphrates—all who know the laws of your God. And you are to teach any who do not know them. ²⁶Whoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king must surely be punished by death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment. (Ezra 7:11-26 NIV)

So what do we see in this decree? We know from Ezra 6:15 that the re-building of the Temple was finished in the sixth year of King Darius which is about 516/5 B.C. Ezra received the above commission from Artaxerxes in 458/7 B.C. which is about 58 years after the work on the temple was finished. This decree again allows all of the Israelites who were willing to return to Judea to go without any restraint or hindrance.

The first objective of Ezra's commission was to inquire about Judah and Jerusalem with regard to the Law of his God. The object of the enquiry is not fully defined except by the clause "with regard to the law of thy God". It seems that the moral and/or religious condition of the Jews at Jerusalem caused anxiety to the Jews at Babylon and Ezra obtained permission to inquire generally into their condition.

Ezra and those who would join him were required to take with them the gift of silver and gold which the king and his advisers have given to the God of Ezra and the Jews. Ezra was also permitted to ask for contributions from the people of the province of Babylon.

The purpose of the gifts was to buy bulls, rams, lambs, grain and drink offerings and to sacrifice them on the altar at the Temple in Jerusalem. It seems that Ezra, on his arrival in Jerusalem, had to make

sure that a sacrifice coming from the king and his advisers would be made to the God of the Israelites. This was a once-off offering from Artaxerxes and his court. They may have been under the illusion that the gods were displeased with Persia. The disasters which had overtaken the Persian Empire since the days of the battle of Marathon (490 B.C.) and more specifically with the revolt of Egypt in 460 B.C., was proof thereof. In this same year, 458 B.C., that he had given this decree to Ezra, he sent an army into Egypt to attempt to put down the Egyptian revolt.

The pagans thought it was important to offer sacrifices to the gods in an attempt to calm their wrath and win their favour. To attain divine favour upon the south-western frontier of the Persian Empire, Artaxerxes believed that a sacrifice to the God of Ezra who dwells in Jerusalem would be the appropriate thing to do.

Artaxerxes also gave Ezra and his fellow Israelites permission to spend the rest of the money on whatever they thought best according to the will of their God. This seems to be an open-ended statement and we can only imagine what it meant. The question naturally arises whether Ezra could apply these extra funds to start the rebuilding of the city. The for and against expositors are about equally divided on this point.

Ezra was explicitly told that he had no authority to impose taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers at the house of God. The fact that he might not have imposed taxes on anyone who had anything to do with the Temple by implication, implies that he had the authority to impose taxes on everybody else. In other words, Ezra was appointed as a leader in the region of Trans-Euphrates. This fact is supported by the last paragraph of the decree:

And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God, which you possess, appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice to all the people of Trans-Euphrates—all who know the laws of your God. And you are to teach any who do not know them.²⁶ Whoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king must surely be punished by death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment.

Ezra could also appoint magistrates and judges to administrate all the people who know the laws of Ezra's God. In other words, he was given authority to govern the Jews in the region of Trans-Euphrates.

Nothing in the text of the decree as copied in the Book of Ezra by the chronicler specifically says anything about the re-building of the City or the wall. On the other hand, nothing in the text prohibits Ezra to make an attempt to restore at least parts of the City or the wall. It is logical that the people who returned with him had to stay somewhere. Ezra had permission to "*do whatever seems best with the rest of the silver and gold, in accordance with the will of your God*".

It would then be natural to assume that Ezra and his companions might have used the extra funds to at least build accommodation for the newly returned expatriates. It would also be natural to assume that they knew that as long as the city wall was not repaired, they would be living in an unsafe and dangerous environment.

The question is, was this the decree that the Angel spoke of in Daniel 9:25?

ARTAXERXES'S DECREE IN HIS 20TH YEAR 445 B.C.

¹In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, ²so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart." I was very much afraid, ³but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" ⁴The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, ⁵and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favour in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it." ⁶Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the

king to send me; so I set a time. ⁷I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? ⁸And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests. ⁹So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me. ¹⁰When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites. (Neh. 2:1-10 NIV)

Was this a command, a decree, a word or not? In contrast to the decree given to Ezra, we do not see the same kind of action by the king whereby he identified himself as "Artaxerxes, king of kings..." However, what we do see is that Artaxerxes did grant Nehemiah's requests. Nehemiah asked for, (a) letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates to give him safe-conduct until he arrives in Judah, (b) a letter to Asaph the keeper of the royal park to give him timber, (i) to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the Temple and, (ii) for the city wall and, (iii) for the residence in which he would stay.

Nehemiah at the time received a visit from a relative, Hanani and certain men who came from Judah. This all happened in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes which would be about 445/4 B.C. thirteen years after Ezra returned to Jerusalem. Nehemiah was concerned about the well-being of the people who were left behind when Nebuchadnezzar had captured and exiled the inhabitants of Judea also about the state Jerusalem was in. It should be noted that he did not inquire about the Temple. Hanani informs Nehemiah that,

...the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. (Neh.1:3 KJV)

Nehemiah certainly did know that Nebuchadnezzar broke the city wall and burned the gates. In fact, every one of the exiles knew that, but why would Hanani then specifically mention that the wall was broken down and the gates burned with fire? It would certainly not be wrong

to assume that Ezra and the group who returned with them did repair the wall also fitting the gates and that these were again vandalised by the enemies of the returned Israelites.

The king of Persia noticed that Nehemiah was sad whereupon he wanted to know what was causing his sadness. Nehemiah then plucked up courage asking him permission to go back to Jerusalem to repair the wall and the gates. Artaxerxes remarkably neither offered a complaint nor did he refuse Nehemiah's request. In fact, Nehemiah said that it pleased the king to send him on this mission. Was there a sudden change of heart of the king to then have allowed the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem? It doesn't seem so.

We, of course, do not have all the facts at our disposal, but it seems that any opposition to the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall was at least not in the mind of Artaxerxes. The question then here is: Why would he not have permitted Ezra to rebuild the city and the wall a few years earlier? In all honesty, we do not know what Ezra accomplished when he went back to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes's reign. Even if we do not agree that Ezra's return was not the decree or word referred to by the Angel, we have to admit that it is possible that it was the decree in question.

On close inspection of Nehemiah's account of his mission, it should be noted that there is no evidence of a written decree or command issued by Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem and its wall. Again, we must take into account that history has left us with very little data covering this period of time. We further know that Nehemiah requested letters from the king to provide him with safe-conduct on his journey but this is about it. Also, we do know that Nehemiah, on his arrival at Jerusalem, inspected the condition of the city, and that he subsequently did repair the wall under very difficult circumstances, in just 52 days.

So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. (Neh. 6:15 KJV)

The 25th of Elul would be about September 444 B.C.

The fact that Nehemiah and his teams finished the work on the wall in just 52 days is, to say the least, remarkable even incredible. Many critics doubt this achievement but in defence of the builders, we

must admit that this was an extraordinary endeavour, that the materials used to restore the wall were close at hand and that there was also a large number of people who participated in this concerted effort. On the other hand, it could be that the wall was not completely broken down and to the extent that Nehemiah and his teams only had to restore parts thereof. Either Nebuchadnezzar did not completely raise the wall to the ground or else, Ezra and his companions have restored some parts of the wall. Again we don't really know.

To WHICH ONE OF THE DECREES DO THE ANGEL REFER?

We have already determined that the first two decrees are probably not what the Angel referred to, leaving us with the last two which might be the answer to the intriguing puzzle.

Should we follow the expositors who support the decree of Artaxerxes with Ezra (Ezra 7), the beginning of the 69-week period would be 458/7 B.C. In years the 69 weeks represent a period of $69 \times 7 = 483$ years. Using Keisan's Online Calculator ³⁴ subtracting 483 years from 458/7 B.C. brings us to A.D. 26/7. As gathered from the above, and according to Luke's gospel, Jesus was baptised round about A.D. 27. The followers of this exposition believe that the wording, "unto an anointed" refers to the baptism of Jesus, and which was also the time when He was anointed with Holy Spirit.

Should we follow the expositors who support the word of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah, Neh. 2, the start of the 69-week period is 445/4 B.C. Again, using the Keisan's Online Calculator, 483 years subtracted from 445/444 B.C. brings us to A.D. 39/40. The followers of this exposition believe that the "unto an anointed" refers to the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and which took place a few days before He was crucified. They also believe that Jesus was crucified in A.D. 33. As can be seen, there is a definite discrepancy of about six years between their calculations and the year in which they believe Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem took place.

In the great scheme of things, six years are not that much seeing that we work with a time-period of about five centuries. However, the argument was raised that the Jews, Babylonians and the Persians used a lunar calendar by which a year has twelve months of 30 days each. A lunar year will then have 360 days. Using this as their base they

proceeded converting the 69 weeks of years (483 lunar years), to days resulting in 173,880 days. Dividing this number by the number of days in a solar year (365.25) equals 476 solar years and which calculation dates Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem at A.D. 32/33.

Both these theories have their own set of pros and cons, and as a matter of fact, I have not yet seen any so-called "solution" that is indisputable or unquestionable.

CONTROVERSY CONCERNING THE SEVENTIETH WEEK

On many points in the text covering the 69-week portion of the 70-weeks vision, most scholars, preachers and evangelists broadly agree on the interpretation thereof. The differences in the various interpretations lie in questions such as, When did the seventy sevens started? Who is the anointed who will come? Who gave the order to rebuild Jerusalem? And, When was it announced?

We have seen that the application of dates to historic events is disputable, and history did not leave us with exact records of when, where and how things happened. Furthermore, the records of ancient historians are scant and often contradictory.

It is, therefore, no wonder that expositors cannot agree on a uniform explanation of the words of the Angel's message to Daniel. It may of coarse be that we, that is everyone who has tried his or her hand on this subject, have tried too hard to arrange every word and phrase in Daniel's vision in an orderly and exact chronology of events that have taken place on specific dates in ancient history. After all, Daniel only wanted to know what was going to happen to his people. Will they go back to the land which God gave to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Will the Temple and Jerusalem be restored and if so, will it happen in his lifetime?

The Angel assured Daniel that they would go back to the land of their fathers and, yes, the Temple and the City would be rebuilt, also, that it would happen soon. Then he gave Daniel more information,

saying that the God of Israel had set aside a certain time in which a number of things concerning the people of Israel have to be accomplished and the Messiah whom they were longing for, would certainly come. He would make a covenant with many (many not as in numbers but rather many as in diversity, meaning many different nations) but His own people – the people of Israel – were going to reject and kill Him. The rejection of their Messiah would result in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and they would again be dispersed among the nations of the earth while the land of their fathers would be made desolate. This was the simple message of the Angel which expositors have turned into a maze of explanations and, in the process, have generated a spiral of questions and answers leading to no conclusive solution.

The seventieth week has been the subject of not only a variety of interpretations, which one can expect, considering the peculiarity of the text, but wild and unfounded speculations, often bordering on pure imagination, have been generated this way. This portion of Daniel's vision is often used by modern day evangelists as the source from which they dream up extraordinary "revelations" as to what we should expect will happen at the end-times before Jesus's return.

The apostle Paul has spelled it out, in very simple language, to Timothy,

But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power therefore. (2 Tim.3:1-5 RV)

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thes. 4:16-18 RV)

In a nutshell, this is all we need to know about the end-times: In the last days, grievous times shall come, but there shall also come a time when Jesus shall return. Let us, therefore, follow Paul's advice, comforting one another with these words.

Concerning the seventieth week then, the Angel did not tell Daniel much about it. Actually, the only thing He explicitly said was that the anointed one would be cut off and that he would have nothing, meaning He would be killed, appearing as if He had accomplished nothing.

The most controversial issue of the seventieth week is whether it followed immediately on the sixty-ninth week or whether there is a gap between the end of the sixty-ninth and the seventieth week, i.e. applying the so-called "gap theory."

Most conservative scholars such as Tertullian, Eusebius, Wycliffe, Luther, Newton, Adam Clark, to name but a few, believe the "70 weeks of years" is an uninterrupted unit and that the prophecy has been completely fulfilled. On the other hand, Futurists, or end-time evangelists, believe that there is a "gap" between weeks 69 and 70 and that the events of week 70 will begin with the future (end-time) revelation of an Antichrist figure. You may rightly ask, Where did this teaching originate?

During the Reformation most of the Reformers believed and preached that the following message from Paul applies to the papal Dynasty:

Now we beseech you, my brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you should not be soon shaken in mind or troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word or letter, as through us, as if the Day of Christ is at hand. Let not anyone deceive you by any means. For that Day shall not come unless there first comes a falling away, and the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, setting himself forth, that he is God. Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? And now you know what holds back, for him to be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already working, only he is now holding back until it

comes out of the midst. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness in those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, so that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, so that all those who do not believe the truth, but delight in unrighteousness, might be condemned. (2 Thes. 2:1-12 MKJV)

Martin Luther said:

Oh Christ, my Lord, look down upon us and bring upon us the day of judgment, and destroy the brood of Satan at Rome. There sits the Man, of whom the Apostle Paul wrote that he would oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God — the Man of Sin, the son of perdition . . . What is the Temple of God? Is it stones and wood? Did not Paul say, The Temple of God is holy, which Temple ye are? To sit — what is it but to reign, to teach and to judge. Who from the beginning of the church has dared to call himself master of the whole church but the Pope alone. None of the saints, none of the heretics ever uttered so horrible a word of pride.³⁶

Reformers constantly referred to the pope as the Antichrist. "Anti" as "in the place of" or "one who occupies the office of Christ on earth". One of the many titles of the pope is indeed "Vicarius Christi" meaning "in the place of Christ".

There was such a stir created during the Reformation that the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-17) strictly forbade anyone to publish a book without prior censorship, and also prohibited anyone from preaching on the subject of Antichrist. The Roman Catholic Church used whatever means they could to try and stem the growth of the Reformation. This movement became known as the anti-Reformation. When this did not work, the Roman Catholic Church decided that a new "interpretation" would have to be found which would deflect attention away from the twelve-century long papal rule of the middle ages.

In 1590 a Spanish Jesuit Roman Catholic Priest and Doctor of Theology, Francisco Ribera, published a 500-page Latin commentary on the Book of Revelation titled *In Sacrum Beati Ioannis Apostoli, &*

Evangelistiae Apocalypsin Commentarij. This commentary was never translated into any other language and was for the eyes of the hierarchy only.

Ribera proposed that the Antichrist would be a single individual who will stand up shortly before the second coming of Jesus Christ. This person will persecute and blaspheme the saints of God. He will be received by the Jews and have the temple rebuilt in Jerusalem. He will abolish Christianity, deny Jesus Christ, destroy Rome and pretend to be God. He will also kill the two witnesses and rule the world.

Following close behind Francisco Ribera was another brilliant Jesuit scholar, Cardinal Robert Bellarmine of Rome (1542-1621). According to Froom Ribera's commentary has laid the foundation for the structure of Futurism,

...built upon and, enlarged by those who followed, until it became the common Catholic position. And then, wonder of wonders, in the nineteenth century this Jesuit scheme of interpretation came to be adopted by a growing number of Protestants, until today Futurism, amplified and adorned with the rapture theory, has become the generally accepted belief of the Fundamentalist wing of popular Protestantism. Although Ribera launched the Futurist system of interpretation, it was popularized and made to register by the astute Cardinal Bellarmine, with his effective phrasings and polemical power.²²

As to Futurism Froom (p.511) says,

...for some three centuries this view was virtually confined to Romanists and was refuted by several masterly Protestant works. But early in the nineteenth century it sprang forth afresh, this time among Protestants Samuel R. Maitland, William Burgh, J. H. Todd, and more recently it has been adopted by most Fundamentalists. In 1826 Maitland revived Ribera's Futurist interpretation in England. The Plymouth Brethren, organized, in 1830 by John Nelson Darby, at Dublin and Plymouth, also laid hold of Maitland's interpretation. And when the High-Church Oxford Movement (1833- 1845) gained ascendancy in Britain, it rejected the Protestant Historical School of interpretation and generally adopted Futurism, though some among them swung to Preterism. Bursting into full flame in 1833, it seized

upon Maitland's interpretation as an argument in favour of reunion with Rome.' German rationalism, on the other hand, increasingly flouted prophecy and prediction. Thus the Jesuit schemes of counter-interpretation were more successful than their authors had ever dared anticipate.²²

Concerning Biblical prophecy, futurism is the theory that most of the events of Revelation and the seventieth week of Daniel 9, are to be fulfilled some time in the future. Futurists mainly believe that an individual commonly referred to as "the Antichrist" will appear on the world stage and who will take the place of Christ as the head of the Church. He will become a world-leader who will persecute Christians and Jews for a period of time.

Preterism, on the other hand, interprets the Book of Daniel as referring to events that had happened from the seventh century B.C. until the first century A.D. Preterists also view the prophecies of Revelations as events that happened in the first century A.D. and, since the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, ancient Israel found its continuation or fulfilment in the Christian church.

The truly amazing part of all this is that the Jesuit inspired "futurist theory" dominates Protestant teaching today. In what could only be described as a stunning reversal, Protestants have, over time, actually become the papacy's greatest ally by spreading its Jesuit spawned propaganda. What irony that Protestants, who originally broke away from what they clearly recognised as the harlot Antichrist-led church of prophecy, now champion the Futurist interpretation from of high-profile global ministries.

The wording of the text of Daniel's vision in no way indicates a break or gap between weeks 69 and 70. Gabriel tells Daniel that,

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.
(Da. 9:24 ASV)

To insert into a 490-year period a "gap" of now almost 2000 years clearly constitutes unwarranted manipulation.

In their Commentary on the Old Testament, Keil & Delitzsch reasons that the phrase “after the threescore and two weeks” implies that the Messiah shall be cut off “in” the seventieth week but, it would not necessarily have to happen at the beginning of the week, rather His “cutting-off” would only constitute the first great event of that week, and those things which are part verse 26 shall follow thereupon.

The events that took place during the first 69 weeks or 483 years prepared the way for the appearance of the Messiah. At the end of this period of time Jesus, the beloved Son of the Most High God was anointed by His Father to be the Saviour and Redeemer of a lost world (Acts 10:38). It would thus only be logical to conclude that Jesus's public ministry as Messiah, Saviour and Redeemer, began after the sixty-ninth week yet within the seventieth week as numbered consecutively.

THE LAST SEVEN YEARS OF A 490-YEAR PERIOD

²⁶And after sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself. And the people of the ruler who shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. And the end of it shall be with the flood, and ruins are determined, until the end shall be war.

²⁷And he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week. And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease, and on a corner of the altar desolating abominations, even until the end. And that which was decreed shall be poured on the desolator.
(MJKV)

THE ANOINTED ONE SHALL BE CUT OFF AND SHALL HAVE NOTHING

The Angel informs Daniel that after the completion of the sixty-two weeks period the anointed one, introduced in verses 24 and 25, shall be cut off and he shall have nothing and that a series of events would

commence which would terminate in the destruction of the city and the temple. The Hebrew word beginning verse 26 is *veacharei* (וְאַחֲרֵי), "and after, and afterwards, and subsequent". It does not necessarily mean immediately, but it does denote what is to succeed or follow a previous action or event. Several instances in the Old Testament translate the word as "afterwards".

What the Angel clearly wants to express is that the cutting off of the Messiah will not happen in the last of the sixty-two weeks, or at the beginning of the seventieth week, but sometime after the sixty-two weeks period has come to an end and also sometime after the beginning of the seventieth week. In verse 25 it is said that the sixty-two weeks would extend "unto the Messiah," i.e., either to his birth or to his revelation as Messiah – His baptism or triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

It is, however, nowhere implied that he would be "cut off" at His first public appearance as Messiah, i.e., after His baptism by John and His forty days fasting and when His ministry had begun; only that it was going to happen after the sixty-two weeks period has elapsed.

MESSIAH SHALL BE CUT OFF

The Hebrew word *karat* literally means "to cut off" or "to cut down". Not only is it used for things such as cutting off a part of a garment or a branch of a tree, but also to cut off or destroy a person. Think of phrases such as, "that soul shall be cut off from his people," "from the midst of the people," "from Israel," "from the congregation," which congregation, frequently appearing in the Scriptures and usually indicating a punishment resulting in death.

In our text, it undoubtedly suggests the idea of violent death. We know that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, was cut off violently, by a judicial decree instigated by an unruly mob. If it should be admitted that the Angel meant to describe the manner of his death, he could not have used a single word that would have better expressed it.

After His very own people had rejected Him, they handed Him over to the Romans demanding His execution.

Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, crucify him, crucify him. (Luke 23:20-21 KJV)

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. (John 1:11 KJV)

But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him and fled. (Matt. 26:56 KJV)

*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who among them considered that **he was cut off out of the land of the living** for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?*

(Isa. 53:3-8 ASV)

BUT NOT FOR HIMSELF – OR SHALL HAVE NOTHING

The Latin Vulgate reads: “*et non erit ejus populus, qui eum negaturus est*” - “and they shall not be his people who shall deny him.” The Syriac reads: “And it is not with him.” The Hebrew phrase is *veayin lo* - and we should look at the meaning of the word *ayin*. Strong's define it as,

*... from a primitive root meaning to be nothing or not exist; a non-entity; generally used as a negative particle.*¹⁰⁹

The text portrays the idea of “nothing,” or “non-existence,” and the meaning here is, that “there was nothing to him,” that is, that he ceased to have authority and power, as in the cutting off of a prince or ruler whose power comes to an end.

According to Barnes,⁶⁷ the German theologian Hengstenberg renders it as follows, “...and is not to him” i.e., his dominion, authority, or power over the covenant people as an anointed prince, would cease at His cutting off. Bertholdt again renders it, “Ohne Nachfolger von den Seinigen zu haben” - “without any successors of his own” - meaning that his family, or the dynasty, would be cut off, or would end with him.

This scholar maintains that the whole phrase denotes, "a sudden and unexpected death," and that it here means that he would have no successor of his own family.

The King James translation, "but not for himself," must have been adopted from the view of the atonement, i.e., that the Messiah did not die for himself, but that his life was given as a ransom for others. The question is whether this translation can be fairly inferred from the Hebrew - the ordinary meaning of the Hebrew word *ayin* being, "nothing, emptiness" - in the sense of there being nothing.

The Messiah would come as a "Prince," and it would therefore be expected that he would come to rule and set up a kingdom, but he would be suddenly cut off and his expected dominion over his people as a prince would not be realised. His people would not allow Him to rule over them. However, this interpretation does not suppose that the real object of his coming would be in vain, or that he would not set up a kingdom. It only means that such a kingdom as would be expected by his people, resembling an earthly kingdom, would not be set up.

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. (John 18:36 ASV)

THE PEOPLE OF THE PRINCE SHALL DESTROY THE CITY

Gabriel explains that subsequently to the cutting off of the Messiah, the people of the ruler (prince KJV) who shall come shall destroy the city (Jerusalem) and the sanctuary (the Temple). Many commentators believe that the prince referred to here is Titus, the son of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, who eventually destroyed Jerusalem and demolished the temple in A.D. 70. but we should not read this wording as if the fulfillment of this part of the prophecy will happen in the seventieth week. It should rather point to the result of Jesus's rejection by His people. Because the Jews rejected their King, they were destined to lose their city along with their much prized sanctuary. Their country will be left desolate.

Another interpretation is that the prince here mentioned, is Jesus and it is His people (the Jews) who will destroy the city. The argument

is that it was the Jews who drove the Romans to the point where they were so angered that they finally decided to make an end to their "Jewish problem." We also know that before the Romans broke through the city's wall the Jews were fighting among themselves and that, in the process, they helped to destroy their own city. No matter what interpretation you then prefer, the most important point is that the city and the sanctuary were destroyed in A.D. 70. The end of verse 26 remarkably states that its end, i.e., the end of the temple, the city and the Jewish political system, shall come with a flood.

According to contemporary historians, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple was swift like a flood and Jerusalem was left desolate. Jesus prophesied the destruction He had foreseen as follows:

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

(Luke 21: 20-24 KJV)

HE SHALL CONFIRM THE COVENANT WITH MANY

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (Da. 9:27KJV)

The Hebrew word בְּרִית וְהַגְּבֵיר (wehigbir berit) is translated in some Bibles, for example the King James Version, the Modern King James Version and the Literal Translation of the Holy Bible as, "and he shall confirm the covenant," and in some such as the American Standard Version, the English Standard Version and the Revised Version as, "and

he shall make a strong or firm covenant". Young's Literal Translation renders the phrase as, "And he hath strengthened a covenant".

As can be seen, there is a difference of meaning between the two renderings of the phrase. To "*confirm the covenant*" implies that an existing covenant is reconfirmed or attested by the covenant maker. To "*make a strong covenant*" implies that a new covenant will be drawn up. The Hebrew word *wehigbir* is made up of a waw, "we" translated as "and" plus the Hiphil stem of the root word "gaw-bar" and according to Strong's¹⁰⁹ it is a primitive root meaning, "to be strong; by implication to prevail, act insolently (also to) exceed, confirm, be great, be mighty, prevail, put to more (strength), strengthen, be stronger, be valiant". The BDB¹⁰⁷ dictionary renders the Hiphil stem of this root word as "confirm a covenant".

I strongly believe that the one who confirms the covenant with many is Jesus,

for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins. (Math 26:28 ASV)

In Malachi 3:1 Jesus is referred to as **the messenger of the covenant**. The Epistle to the Hebrews calls Jesus **the mediator of a better covenant**.

The word, "many" should not be read as a numeric value such as 20, 100 or a few thousand, but rather as a diversity such as many different peoples, nations and tongues.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. (Rev. 14:6 KJV)

*But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the **covenant he mediates** is better, since it is enacted on better promises.* (Heb. 8:6 ESV)

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. (Heb. 9:15 ESV)

Jehovah God says this about Jesus Christ,

I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you (Jesus) as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. (Isa. 42:6-7 ESV)

Apostle Paul speaks to the Galatians about God's promise to Abraham saying,

Now, God made his promises to Abraham and to his descendant. The scripture does not use the plural "descendants," meaning many people, but the singular "descendant," meaning one person only, namely, Christ. What I mean is that God made a covenant with Abraham and promised to keep it. The Law, which was given four hundred and thirty years later, cannot break that covenant and cancel God's promise. (Gal.3:16-17 GNB)

The truth is that the *covenant* of Daniel 9:27 is not just a 7-year covenant, as many scholars want us to believe. It is the *everlasting covenant*, the same one Abraham was saved by, for he believed by faith that the Father would provide a *Lamb* to atone for his sins. Jesus confirmed this covenant in the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy.

Jesus and His disciples fulfilled the seventieth week of Daniel, from about A.D. 27-34, when they confirmed with the Jews that He is the promised Messiah, who ratified the everlasting covenant with His blood as Passover Lamb. Jesus's public ministry lasted about three-and-a-half years during which His focus was "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6). For another three-and-a-half years after His resurrection, His disciples preached mostly to Jews (see Acts 1-6).

On Pentecost Day, and on the testimony of the Holy Spirit-filled apostles, about 3000 Jews were saved and baptised in the Name of Jesus. The true Church of Jesus Christ is therefore built on a foundation of Jews who accepted Jesus as their Savior.

When the Jewish Sanhedrin stoned Stephen in about A.D. 34 (Acts 7), the gospel was also taken to and shared with the Gentiles (Acts 13:46). Thereafter the disciples were scattered throughout Judea preaching the gospel. Philip was led to the Ethiopian who also was saved. Saul was converted to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. Peter was

given the vision of the unclean animals, which meant that the everlasting covenant was also to be preached to the Gentile nations.

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus confirmed that He was the promised Messiah when He read the passage from Isaiah:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind, To set at liberty them that are bruised, To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears. (*Luke 4:16-21 ASV*)

There are many more scriptures telling us that Jesus is the one who confirmed, or if you prefer, made a new covenant with many.

HE SHALL CAUSE THE SACRIFICE TO CEASE

Daniel 9:27 says that in the middle of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. Jesus was crucified about three-and-a-half years after His baptism by John. When Jesus died on the cross the curtain of the temple was torn in two and the Holy of holies was exposed (Mark 15:38). Although the daily sacrifices were carried out for a number of years after Jesus's death and resurrection, by then they had altogether lost their value. Jesus, who was sacrificed once and for all replaced the daily sacrifices and offerings of the Jews. Hebrews 10:4-10 confirms what Gabriel told Daniel:

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" When he said above, "You have neither

*desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." **He does away with the first in order to establish the second.** And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (ESV)*

Jesus made the final sacrifice and offering for the redemption of sin. Therefore, any other sacrifice and offering would be redundant. Should the Jews ever rebuild the temple and reinstate the daily offerings, it will only be a hollow and meaningless act. In fact, it will be an abomination in the eyes of God.

The seventy weeks came to an end about three or four years after Jesus's death. During these three to four years the gospel was preached exclusively to the Jews. They finally rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ when they persecuted the followers of Jesus and stoned Stephen (Acts 7:54-60). The period of grace granted to them was ended. Their house would be left desolate until Jesus returns again.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Math. 23:37-39 KJV)

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE

And as he went forth out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Teacher, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings! (Mark 13:1 ASV)

And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. (Math. 24:2 KJV)

The disciples of Jesus drew His attention to the illustrious buildings of the Temple and the temple site generally referred to as the Second Temple. The First Temple was the one constructed by King Solomon and destroyed by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar.

The Second Temple was originally constructed by a group of Jewish exiles who returned to the Levant from Babylon under the leadership of Zerubbabel. It was a modest structure and by far not comparable to the First Temple of King Solomon.

During the reign of Herod the Great, the Second Temple was rebuilt (overhauled). The magnificent expanded structure along with its impressive facades was one of the larger first century construction projects Herod the Great had initiated. The Temple was the centre of religious and social life for the Jewish people and for them it was a sign of God's presence in Judaea.

The reconstruction of the Temple began with a massive expansion of the Temple Mount. Mount Moriah had a plateau at the northern end declining sharply on the southern slope. Herod wanted the entire mountain turned into a giant platform. Apparently, the Temple Mount was originally intended to be 1600 feet wide by 900 feet broad by 9 stories high with walls up to 16 feet thick, but the whole project was never finished. A trench was dug around the mountain and huge stone blocks were laid to build a retaining wall:

The temple wall and retaining wall were constructed out of limestone blocks called ashlar. Ashlars are large stone blocks cut smooth, with narrow margins around the edges and smooth slightly raised bosses in the center. They are easy to identify and locate in the Western Wall and in the rest of the Temple Mount wall.⁶³

The largest ashlar stones is in the southwest corner of the Temple Mount complex measuring 39 feet 4 inches long by 7 feet 10 inches wide and 43 inches high (12m x 2.4m x 1.09m) weighing about 80 tons.

But when ye see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not (let him that readeth understand), then let them that are in Judaea flee unto the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down, nor enter in, to take anything out of his house: and let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak. But woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! And pray

ye that it be not in the winter. For those days shall be tribulation, such as there hath not been the like from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never shall be. And except the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh would have been saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he chose, he shortened the days. (Mark 13:14-20 ASV)

In each of the Synoptic gospels, Mark, Mathew and Luke, we have an account of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. Just a few days before Jesus was crucified He told His disciples what to expect in the near future and He cautioned them to "*take heed and let no man lead you astray*".

They, the disciples and true followers of Jesus, would hear of many claiming to be Messiah of God. They were going to hear of wars and rumours of wars but they should not let that trouble them. They would be delivered up to councils and in the synagogues, they would be beaten and brought before governors and kings, yet they should keep on testifying of Him. Jesus told them, in no uncertain terms, that they were going to be hated by all men for His name's sake. Then Jesus said:

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand): Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains... (Matt. 24:15-16 KJV)

All those who were in Judaea (those who believed in Jesus) should then flee to the mountains. They should not waste time gathering their belongings and all they should then have to do was to get out of Jerusalem as fast as possible. Luke clearly tells us what the abomination that had led to destruction was. He says,

...but when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand. (Luke 21:20 KJV)

According to Josephus the sheer incompetence of the Roman governors of the province was the main cause of Jewish anger. The ignorance and maliciousness of the Judean governors reflected the attitude of the emperors of Rome. When Pontius Pilate was elected by the Senate to take over the reigns from the procurator of Jerusalem in A.D. 27, the common Jewish man on the street had no trust or love for the Romans nor did they had for the Jews. They regarded one another

with suspicion and mistrust. The deep-seated corruption of the procurators was transferred to the local Jewish and non-Jewish authorities, and they had ignored the circumstances of the common Jews. Most of the profits gained from goods traded in the markets of Jerusalem went straight to the elite. Political corruption was the order of the day, and it affected the common Jewish citizens severely.

In A.D. 64, Gessius Florus presided over Judaea and showing the very same indifference to the Jewish populace as his predecessors were bent on, however, he did not have the political foresight to alleviate the tense Jewish society's anxieties when things turned sour. Josephus regarded Florus as an incompetent ruler. This Jewish historian remarked:

This man committed every species of rapine and injustice. He despoiled whole cities, and ruined populous communities. Entire districts were reduced by him to desolation, and many of the Jews fled to foreign countries in order to get away from his rule.⁵¹

At this time the Christians understood what Jesus had prophesied, namely to flee, and they did so going to Pella in Trans-Jordania. Pretending that Emperor Nero needed money, Florus filled up his own coffers from the Temple treasury, not in the least having been amused when some Jewish men passed a basket around, collecting money for him, "...as for one that was destitute of possessions, and in a miserable condition".^{31d}

Lacking insight and humour, Florus commanded instead that those who mocked him be handed over to him for due punishment, but the people "begged forgiveness for those who have spoken amiss".^{31d} However, being relentless, Florus ordered his soldiers to attack the Upper Market slaying all he met on his way, his soldiers slaying about 3600 men, women and children in sheer anger.

The Jews having had enough of Roman suppression responded with a large-scale rebellion sometimes called *ha-Mered ha-Gadol* – Great Revolt commonly known as The Jewish War. The rebels quickly overran the Roman military garrison of Judaea, consequently King Herod Agrippa II, together with Roman officials, fled Jerusalem. To restore order and quell the revolt, Cestius Gallus, the legate of Syria, brought in the Syrian army who initially gained some success in the region of Jaffa. However, Jewish rebels ambushed the Syrian Legion and

defeated them at the Battle of Beth Horon slaying about 6,000 Roman soldiers. Having defeated the Romans here, was naturally a huge victory to the Jewish rebels especially when the Romans abandoned their posts, fleeing back to Syria.

A very angry Emperor Nero quickly lashed back, sending a strategic general, Vespasian, to destroy the rebel armies and punish the citizens in the Judean province. Vespasian and his son, Titus, confronted Judaea with a much stronger army, this time slaughtering nearly every Jewish rioter in Caesarea and northern Galilee. Around 10,000 Jewish people were either killed or sold into slavery, compelling the remainder of Jewish rioters to take refuge in Jerusalem.

The people of Jerusalem thereupon stopped paying taxes, killing all the Roman soldiers who were stationed in the city, the Zealots and the Sicarii overrunning the Roman military garrison, and driving them clean out of the city. This was, of course, a significant victory for the Jews and support for the Zealots in the city grew significantly.

A Judean provisional government was formed including among others a former High Priest Ananus ben Ananus and Joshua ben Gamla as leaders. However, Jewish dominance over the Romans was short lived and by A.D. 67 the Romans, under Vespasian and Titus regained all of Judaea, killing all the Jewish rebels who were left. At this time the Roman Empire was geared and convinced to besiege Jerusalem.

The people within Jerusalem were stricken with panic. Many of them realised that they did not stand the slightest chance against the mighty fist of Rome. Therefore, many of the rebel leaders wanted the rebel leaders to surrender peacefully in the hope of saving as many Jewish lives as possible. However, the rebel leaders refused such cowardice and afraid that the more moderate Jewish leaders would cause the common people to turn against them, the Zealots and Sicarii publicly executed their opponents and hung their dead bodies publicly and so that everyone could see what would happen to them, should they dare to oppose the rebellion.

Destiny intervened, and a short while before the Romans had reached the outskirts of Jerusalem, Nero died and Vespasian was called back to Rome to help stop the civil war in the city. Vespasian was elected new emperor in A.D. 69, appointing Titus to take command of the war against the Jews. The Romans were at the gates of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Titus began his siege a few days before Passover, on 14 April, surrounding the city with three legions on the western side and a fourth on the Mount of Olives, to the east. According to Josephus, Jerusalem was packed with droves of people who, as was the Jewish custom, had come to celebrate Passover.

Inside the walls of Jerusalem chaos quickly broke out. The various Jewish factions began fighting each other for dominance and in the process, murdering their own people left, right and centre. The Zealots, led by Johanan of Giscala burnt the crops and dried food that the Sadducees and Pharisees had stored proving that the siege was expected. Johanan believed that would drive the common people to irreversible desperation and that such action would force them to fight the Romans as indeed they had nothing to lose.

The Zealots was convinced that God had no other choice but to come to their aid as they had no food to sustain them any longer. To a certain extent, the strategy of the Zealots did work but it was not sufficient to lead them to victory over the Romans. According to Josephus nearly one million people, men, woman and children, decided to defend the city after the burning of the food they still had left, however, this was but the beginning of a severe and dreadful famine that erupted, claiming the lives of thousands of souls trapped inside the walls of the city.

The Romans quickly realised that it was no easy task to conquer Jerusalem. The city was heavily fortified, and they quickly concluded that the only way to success they had fixed their hope on, was to erect Roman camps all around the city, close to the city's walls. This way, anyone who dared to escape from the city was instantly killed, meaning they were on the whole brutally crucified, their bodies having been hanged either on a cross or nailed to the wall facing the city. This awful sight of suffering and the dead exposed in such a horrendous way terrified those within the walled city.

After a siege of seven months of the city, the Romans finally managed to damage the city's walls to the extent where they were able to break through the defensive walls and, in the summer of A.D. 70, the city was subjugated. By then the rebels controlling the city on the inside, were worn out. They were in no shape to match the superior military prowess of the Roman soldiers. The fierce Roman soldiers in no time forced the brave Zealots into fighting in the streets. Thousands upon

thousands of Jerusalem's inhabitants were ruthlessly killed. None was spared. Woman, children, infants, young and old fell before a Roman force that was set to kill and destroy whatever they could.

When the Zealots and the Sicarii retreated to the Temple, the Romans breached its walls, setting fire to the illustrious built Temple. The site that once was a place of refuge for thousands who placed their hope in God was destroyed and literally broken down, stone by stone, just as Jesus had prophesied. For the Jews, it must have seemed as if God was no longer in the city. The Romans left no opportunity to plunder and burn the rest of the city razing it to the ground soon after the Temple had been destroyed. By September A.D. 70, the ruins of Jerusalem was under complete control of the Romans.

Josephus claims that more than a million men, women and children were killed during the siege. He attributes this to the celebration of Passover which accounts for the vast number of people present among the death toll. Armed rebels, as well as the frail citizens, were put to death, the remainder of survivors of the Jerusalem siege having become Roman prisoners. About 97,000 were enslaved, including Johanan of Giscala who was sentenced to life imprisonment. Some of the enslaved thousands were forced to become gladiators who, eventually, died in the Roman arenas. Many were forced to assist in the building of the Forum of Peace and the Colosseum. Those under 17 years of age were sold into slavery.

Titus and his soldiers celebrated victory upon their return to Rome by parading the Menorah and Table of the Bread of God's Presence through the streets. Up until this public show, these items had only been seen by the high priest of the Temple. This historical event was memorialised in the Arch of Titus.

After the Fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the city and the Temple, there were still a few Judean strongholds in which the rebels continued holding out, at Herodium, Machaerus, and Masada, however, both Herodium and Machaerus fell to the Roman army within the next two years, Masada remained as the final stronghold of the Judean rebels.

In A.D. 73 the Romans, after a long and unprecedented effort, breached the walls of Masada, capturing the fortress. On entering Masada, the Roman soldiers discovered that all the Jewish defenders had committed suicide, preferring this type of killing of one another

than subjecting themselves to Roman rule. With the fall of Masada the First Jewish-Roman War, which started in A.D. 66, came to an end seven years later in A.D. 73.

And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.
(Luke 19:41-44 ASV)

DESOLATION

The ASV renders the second part of verse 27 as,

...and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate.

The KJV, on the other hand, reads:

...and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Also, in the ancient versions thereof a great variety in rendering this passage exist. According to Barnes⁶⁷ the Latin Vulgate reads, “And there shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation.” The Greek, “And upon the temple shall be an abomination of desolations.” The Syriac. “And upon the extremities of the abomination shall rest desolation.” The Arabic, “And over the sanctuary shall there be the abomination of ruin.” Luther renders it, “And upon the wings shall stand the abomination of desolation.” Lengerke and Hengstenberg render it, “And upon the summit of abomination comes the destroyer.” Prof. Stuart, “And the water shall be over a winged fowl of abominations.”

The only explanation for these different translations lies in the complexity in the original text. A “literal” translation could read “and

on the wing of a detestable thing that causes desolation" but, again, this is only one of many possible translations.

The following clause of this text is a little bit more clear translating as: "until the completion of which is firmly decided." The Hebrew words are *ye ad kalah* and it simply means that the series of events announced in the prophecy shall, in fact, reach to the completion of everything pertaining to the city and Temple: (a) The whole purpose in regard to this shall be completed. The reason for which it had to be rebuilt – that is for the Messiah of God to make His appearance as such – will be fully accomplished, (b) The sacrifices to be offered there shall, in effect, come to an end when the Messiah will be offered as the full and final sacrifice for all who would seek to be saved, and (c) The whole civil and religious polity connected with the city and temple shall pass away.

SHALL BE POURED UPON THE DESOLATE

The Hebrew word *so-mem* means "to make desolate". Desolate as an adjective describes a place which is deserted of people and in a state of bleak and dismal emptiness. As a verb it is the action taken to make a place bleak and desperately empty or bare. Some Bible translations reads "desolator" which would then be someone who makes a place desolate.

The meaning of the text in consideration then is that the wrath of God would be poured out on the people of the city in the manner of a severe storm. "Upon the desolate" is then a reference to Jerusalem viewed as desolate or reduced to ruins. The Angel perhaps contemplated it, as he was speaking, in ruins or as desolate, and he saw this also as the termination of the entire series of predictions. In view of the whole, speaking of Jerusalem appropriately as "the desolate." In Luke 21:24 Jesus said:

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (ASV)

Even though Jerusalem is now again the city of the Jews and even though many anticipate that they will again rebuild the Temple,

Jerusalem is still desolate, that is, lacking the presence of God - as it happened in the days of old when God manifested His glory among them. However, Jerusalem will remain spiritually desolate until the Prince of Peace returns on the clouds of heaven revealing Himself to the nation of Israel. Only then will they realise that it is He whom they have rejected as their promised Messiah!

**TO GOD BE THE GLORY
GREAT THINGS HE HAS DONE
SO LOVED HE THE WORLD
THAT HE GAVE US HIS SON
WHO YIELDED HIS LIFE
AN ATONEMENT FOR SIN
AND OPENED THE LIFE GATE
FOR ALL TO GO IN**

Lyrics:Fanny Jane Crosby (1820-1915)

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